



A study on production and marketing problems of small-scale salt pan producers in Tamil Nadu

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Abstract

Purpose: Salt business in India has experienced incredible expansion and success. Among the several Indian states, Tamil Nadu ranks second in terms of salt output. About 8.06 lakh acres of land were set aside for salt production in Tamil Nadu. The manufacture of salt involves about 16,500 individuals. There was no discernible difference between the salt workers and a similar set of workers who worked with salt produce. Therefore, this study emphasizes the necessity of creating policies to prevent health issues among employees in the Tamil Nadu study area.

Design/methodology/approach: Based on both direct and secondary data, the current study aims to comprehend the health issues related to production and marketing of small-scale salt pan manufacturers in Tamil Nadu. 150 salt producers were chosen for the study using a straightforward random selection technique.

Findings: Approximately 85% of the salt produced in the state is produced in three major districts: Tuticorin, Ramanathapuram, and Nagapattinam. In the three districts.

Keywords: Salt producers, workers, small scale, production, tamil nadu, and salt consumption

Introduction

Sea brine, lake brine, subsurface brine, and rock salt deposits are India's primary sources of salt. An endless supply of salt can be found in seawater. The weather and soil characteristics along the shore limit the amount of salt that can be produced. India has a long history of producing salt. In the current market, branded edible salt is more expensive than salt from small-scale manufacturers without well-known brands. Similarly, the majority of salt products that come from the small-scale manufacturing category lack the necessary amount of fortification. The salt industry plays a vital role in the economic development of India, with Tamil Nadu being one of the leading producers in the country. Small-scale salt pan producers contribute significantly to overall salt production, especially in coastal districts like Tuticorin, Ramanathapuram, and Nagapattinam. Despite their contribution, these producers face numerous challenges in both production and marketing. Factors such as dependence on weather conditions, lack of modern technology, and limited financial resources affect production efficiency. In addition, marketing problems like the influence of middlemen, lack of branding, and limited access to digital platforms reduce their profitability. Health issues among workers further complicate the situation, impacting productivity. Therefore, it is important to study these production and marketing problems in detail. This study aims to analyze the difficulties faced by small-scale salt pan producers and suggest measures for their improvement. Tamil Nadu is one of the major salt-producing states in India, where small-scale producers play a crucial role in meeting the demand for salt. However, these producers encounter various production-related issues such as dependency on climatic conditions, lack of modern equipment, and financial constraints. Along with production difficulties, marketing problems like price fluctuations, middlemen interference, lack of branding, and limited market access affect their income. The study also highlights

the health problems faced by workers engaged in salt production.

Statement of the Problem

Comparatively speaking, a significant percentage of salt workers are exposed to and deal with occupational health issues, such as the prevalence of ocular symptoms and dermatological symptoms like headache, giddiness, dyspnoea, and joint and muscle discomfort. Additionally, it will make an effort to analyse the farm mechanization involved in the production of salt as well as the current marketing strategies used by Tamil Nadu salt marketers. These distinctive physical characteristics of the state will persuade the researcher to carry out the current study

Scope of the Study

To analyse worker health, salt distribution, and related bodily functions, the current study is focusing on the issues faced by salt workers. The districts of Tuticorin, Nagapattinam, and Ramanathapuram were included in the study since they are known to produce the least amount of salt in Tamil Nadu

Objectives of the Study

1. To Study the profile of small-scale pan producers in Tamil Nadu.
2. To find out the health problems of salt producers in the study areas.

Research Methodology

Both primary and secondary data served as the foundation for this investigation. Secondary data must be gathered from a variety of sources, including government publications, books, periodicals, magazines, reports from the ministries of agriculture and commerce, and websites. The researcher has meticulously crafted a distinct interview schedule that will be distributed to the sample respondents residing in various

regions of the chosen Tamil Nadu region to gather primary data regarding the issues facing small-scale salt pan producers in the state. 150 salt producers were chosen by the researcher using a basic random sample technique.

Sources of Data

Primary Data

Primary data is first-hand information gathered by a variety of methods, including emailing, interviewing, and observation. To gather primary data for this study, users and consumers from several cities were surveyed and interviewed.

Secondary Data

Secondary data for this study was gathered from a variety of sources, including reports, documents, theses (both published and unpublished), journals, blogs, magazines, research papers, and other bulletins.

Review of Literature

Murugan, et.al., (2016) According to this study, a significant proportion of salt workers are exposed to salt and have occupational health issues, such as the incidence of ocular symptoms and dermatological symptoms like headache, giddiness, dyspnoea, and joint and muscle discomfort. The most prevalent symptoms among salt workers were ocular issues, most likely brought on by irritation from bright sunlight and the glare it produces. Other common symptoms were dermatitis, traumatic ulcers, headaches, giddiness, and pains in the muscles and joints. Creating a system to stop these issues from happening to them is necessary.

Durairaj, et. al., (2016) [1] According to this study, many salt workers are exposed to salt and experience various health issues. In Tuticorin, Ramanathapuram, and Nagapattinam, salt is made using the age-old process of brine—water that contains a lot of salt—evaporating in salt pans. Workers' working conditions are not improved by the introduction of contemporary production technology. As a result of their involvement in the production process, salt workers are impacted by several health-related problems. Murugan, et, al., (2015) According to this study, many salt workers who

are exposed to salt experience health issues such as headaches, giddiness, dyspnoea, and joint and muscle pain. Salt workers most frequently experienced health issues, most likely as a result of irritation from direct sunlight and the glare it produces. Other typical symptoms for salt workers included headaches, giddiness, and irritation. It is necessary to create a system that will keep these issues from happening to them.

Hypothesis for the Study

Ho1: There is no significant difference between marketing problems of small scale salt pan producers and problems faced by the salt producers.

Table 1: District -Wise Classification Of The Respondents

S. No	District	No of Respondents	Percentage
1	Ramanathapuram	55	38.6
2	Tuticorin	29	38.0
3	Nagapattinam	31	23.4
4	Total	150	100

Source: Primary Data

shows that most of the respondents (38.6 Percentage) are belonging to Ramanathapuram district and 38.0 Percentage of the respondents are Tuticorin district and remaining 23.4 Percentage of the Respondents are Nagapattinam district.

Table 2: Problems Faced By The Salt Producers

S No	Problems	No of Respondents
1	Headache	18
2	Breathlessness	27
3	Eye infections	33
4	Muscular and joint pains	13
5	Total	100

Source: Primary data

It is evident that the primary issue facing the salt workers was one of pay. The second most significant issue was then dangerous job. The salt workers' least significant issue was the health problem.

Table 3: Marketing Problems of Small-Scale Salt Pan Producers

S.No	Small-Scale Salt Pan Producers	SA	A	N	DA	SDA	Total
1	Marketing strategies in my area effectively promote salt products	53	29	33	25	10	150
		35	19	22	17	7	100
2	Digital marketing increases awareness of salt products	38	35	31	28	18	150
		25	23	21	19	12	100
3	Buyer feedback and quality perception impact sales	32	38	27	19	34	150
		21	25	18	13	23	100
4	Product quality and packaging attract customers	35	48	19	30	18	150
		23	32	13	20	12	100
5	Middlemen influence the sale of salt products	43	35	32	26	14	150
		29	23	21	17	10	100

Source: Primary data

According to the data, 54% of respondents agree that marketing strategies in their area effectively promote salt products, while 24% disagree, showing moderate effectiveness. About 48% believe that digital marketing increases awareness, whereas 31% do not agree, indicating mixed opinions. Around 46% agree that buyer feedback and quality perception impact sales, but a notable 36% disagree,

reflecting varying experiences. A higher 55% of respondents agree that product quality and packaging attract customers, while 32% disagree, highlighting its importance. Nearly 52% agree that middlemen influence the sale of salt products, compared to 27% who disagree. Across all statements, a considerable percentage of respondents remain neutral, suggesting uncertainty or lack of strong opinion.

Table 4: ANOVA for Marketing Problems of Small-Scale Salt Pan Producers and Problems faced by salt producers

Variables	Problems	N	Mean	S.D.	F Value	Sig.
Marketing strategies in my area effectively promote salt products	Headache	18	4.44	1.10	3.890	0.001*
	Breathlessness	27	3.16	1.19		
	Eye infections	33	3.20	1.21		
	Muscular and joint pains	13	3.87	1.26		
	Total	100	3.05	1.24		
Digital marketing increases awareness of salt products	Headache	18	3.22	1.22	6.020	0.000*
	Breathlessness	27	3.10	1.15		
	Eye infections	33	4.30	1.20		
	Muscular and joint pains	13	4.10	1.60		
	Total	100	4.38	1.06		
Buyer feedback and quality perception impact sales	Headache	18	3.33	1.20	5.350	0.001*
	Breathlessness	27	3.65	1.30		
	Eye infections	33	3.20	1.21		
	Muscular and joint pains	13	3.50	1.56		
	Total	100	4.25	1.23		
Product quality and packaging attract customers	Headache	18	4.10	1.15	5.620	0.004*
	Breathlessness	27	4.36	1.23		
	Eye infections	33	3.33	1.41		
	Muscular and joint pains	13	4.11	1.62		
	Total	100	3.55	1.20		
Middlemen influence the sale of salt products	Headache	18	3.30	1.26	5.210	0.002*
	Breathlessness	27	4.09	1.50		
	Eye infections	33	4.51	1.15		
	Muscular and joint pains	13	4.12	1.20		
	Total	100	3.68	1.68		

Source: Primary data

The ANOVA results for marketing problems of small-scale salt pan producers show that all the variables have significance values less than 0.05, indicating statistically significant differences among the groups. For marketing strategies effectively promote salt products ($F = 3.890$, $p = 0.001$), the mean scores are 4.44 headache, 3.16 breathlessness, 3.20 eye infections, and 3.87 muscular and joint pains. For digital marketing increases awareness ($F = 6.020$, $p = 0.000$), the mean values are 3.22, 3.10, 4.30, and 4.10 respectively. In the case of buyer feedback and quality perception impact sales ($F = 5.350$, $p = 0.001$), the mean scores are 3.33, 3.65, 3.20, and 3.50.

For product quality and packaging attract customers ($F = 5.620$, $p = 0.004$), the mean values are 4.10, 4.36, 3.33 and 4.11. Lastly, middlemen influence the sale of salt products ($F = 5.210$, $p = 0.002$) shows mean scores of 3.30, 4.09, 4.51 and 4.12. Since all p-values (0.001, 0.000, 0.001, 0.004 and 0.002) are less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected for all variables, indicating that there is a significant difference among the groups regarding marketing problems faced by salt producers.

Findings

1. The study reveals that a majority of salt producers (38.6%) belong to Ramanathapuram district, followed closely by Tuticorin (38.0%) and Nagapattinam (23.4%).
2. Eye infections (33%) and breathlessness (27%) are the most common health problems faced by salt workers, indicating serious occupational health risks.
3. Headache (18%) and muscular/joint pain (13%) are also reported, but comparatively at a lower level.
4. More than half of the respondents (54%) agree that marketing strategies are effective, though a significant portion still faces difficulties.

5. Digital marketing awareness is moderate, with only 48% of respondents agreeing to its usefulness, showing limited adoption among small-scale producers.
6. Around 46% of respondents believe buyer feedback and quality perception influence sales, highlighting the importance of customer satisfaction.
7. Product quality and packaging are key factors, with 55% agreement, making them crucial for attracting customers.
8. Middlemen play a major role in the marketing process, as 52% of respondents agree on their influence in sales.
9. A noticeable percentage of respondents remain neutral across marketing aspects, indicating lack of awareness or clarity in marketing practices.

Suggestions

1. Salt has expanded to such a size and significance that it is the world's largest industry. India's third-largest source of foreign exchange earnings is the salt sector.
2. This extraordinary increase is solely the outcome of the evolutionary process and is not the product of any specific phenomena.
3. Since the salt workers remain unemployed for eight to nine months without getting other alternative works in the off season, subsistence allowance and retaining fee may be given to the salt workers during off-seasons for 15 weeks.
4. Separate toilet facilities for male and female workers should be provided in the salt pans.
5. The Government should provide welfare measures and health's one assures to all the workers

Conclusion

The salt industry's working circumstances expose its workers to inhalable salt dust; salt crystals directly affect

brine, causing physical stress, strong sunshine, and glare from sunlight reflected off brine surfaces and salt crystals. However, many health problems among salt producers are brought on by the harsh weather and difficult working circumstances for salt miners. To address occupational health issues among salt producers, modernization, skilled mechanization, and the use of personal protection equipment must be required. According to the study's findings, there were no differences between the salt producers and a similar group of producers and salt produce workers. Therefore, this study emphasizes the necessity of creating policies to prevent health issues among employees in the Tamil Nadu study area.

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