



AN ANALYSIS OF MARKETING PRACTICES OF RUBBER GROWERS IN KAMRUP DISTRICT OF ASSAM

Maudud Shakique Ahmed

M.Com 4th semester, Royal School of Commerce, Assam Royal Global University

Bidyut Jyoti Kalita

Assistant Professor, Royal School of Commerce, Assam Royal Global University

ABSTRACT Rubber is the plantation crop of India. India is the 4th largest natural rubber producer in the world. Assam is one of the major rubber producing states in India. A large number of rural dwellers are involved with rubber farming in the recent years under the patronage of the Rubber Board. This paper is an attempt to analyze the marketing practices undertaken by the natural rubber growers in Assam. In the process of analyzing the same, the impact of socio-economic factors on their marketing practices are also considered. The study is based on both primary as well as secondary data. A total of 30 rubber growers, irrespective of their farm size are interviewed selected through non-probabilistic convenience sampling procedure. It is observed that 33 percent of the growers sell their products through the agent of the middlemen. Only 20 percent sell in the primary market. Besides, rather than socio-economic factors of the growers, rubber marketing is influenced by other market related institutional factors. Price fluctuation is the major marketing related problem faced by the farmers in the study region.

KEYWORDS : Rubber, growers, marketing, problems.

INTRODUCTION:

Rubber is a perennial crop with economic life span of 32 years. Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand and Africa are the main rubber producing countries in the world. Thailand is the largest rubber producing country in the world. More than 90% of the production is exported from the Thailand. Rubber export contributes substantially towards the Gross Domestic Products than the other crops. Indonesia is the second largest rubber producer in the world. Malaysia is the 3rd largest rubber producing country in the world. India is a prime producer of rubber and it holds fourth position globally. Among the Indian state Kerala is the largest producer with 78 per cent share of production. India's average rubber productivity is 1631 kg. per hectare is the highest among the major natural rubber producing countries. British planters brought rubber into India as early as in 1873. However, the first commercial rubber plantations in India were established in 1902 at Thattekadu, Kerala. Thereafter, it spread to all over Kerala and adjoining Kanyakumari district of Tamilnadu state. Thus Kerala and Kanyakumari became known as the traditional rubber growing zone of the country contributing to 83.64% share in area and 94.14% share in production of rubber in India. However, rubber plantations gradually spread to other states like Karnataka, Goa, Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal and the North-Eastern states including Assam. In North-Eastern Region of India rubber plantation was introduced only after Independence in the greater Assam. Rubber farming was started in Assam in the year 1955 and in Tripura in the year 1963. (Debbarna, 2017). These are the two major rubber producing states in North-East India. Natural Rubber (NR) is the most versatile industrial raw material of plant origin. The main source of natural rubber is the rubber tree *Hevea brasiliensis*, native of the Amazon River basin. Idea of synthetic alternative to natural rubber and its development took place during the 20th century. While natural rubber is a gift of nature, synthetic rubbers are made in the chemical plants, using the raw materials mostly from the petroleum industry. Wide range of products including adhesive tape, balloons, breathing bag, conveyor belts, erasers, tires etc. are made from rubber.

OBJECTIVE: To study the marketing practices of rubber growers in Assam

METHODOLOGY:

In the present study both the primary and secondary sources are used. Secondary sources include published report from the National Rubber Board, Food and Agricultural Organization etc. Primary source include data collected by the researchers through structured schedule design for the present study. Due to lack of a complete sampling frame, researchers rely on non-probabilistic convenience sampling procedure. Convenience sampling is justified when researchers have lesser information about the respondent. Besides, it can be used when respondent belong to same reference group. The sample size for the present study was 30 rubber growers from Assam. Sample unit was the rubber growers irrespective of their farm size. Structured schedule was designed to collect the desired data. The schedule was administered by

the researchers to obtain the desired response. In order to analyse the influence of socio-economic variables on marketing practices chi-square (fisher's exact test) was used. As the study is based on plantation or cash crop farming and hence, the findings and suggestion are not equally applicable for farming of food crop. Covid-19 pandemic and its consequence in terms of constraints in data collection through primary filed survey can be noted here.

Analysis and findings

Table 1: Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Factors	Frequency	Percentage
Literacy		
Below 7 th std	0	0
8 to 10	17	56.7
10 to 12	7	23.3
Graduate	6	20.00
Category		
Marginal	5	16.7
Small	5	16.7
Semi-medium	11	36.7
Medium:	9	30.0
Large:	0	0
Age		
18 to 29	6	20.00
30 to 39	6	20.00
40 to 49	11	36.7
50 to 59	7	23.3
Income		
Rs 30,000 to Rs 60,000	11	36.7
Rs 60,000 to Rs 90,000	6	20.0
Rs 90,000 to Rs 1,20,000	7	23.3
Rs 1,20,000 to Rs 1,50,000	6	20.0

Source: Field Survey

Majority of the respondents (56.7%) have their formal education upto 8th to 10th standards. Majority of the respondents are semi-medium land holders (2 to 4 hectares). Majority of the respondents (36.7%) belongs to the age group of 40 to 49. Majority of the respondents (36.7%) belong to the income group of Rs 30,000 to Rs 60,000.

Marketing Practices:

Marketing is the critical process of linking the producers with the consumers. Following are the marketing practices adopted by rubber growers in Assam

Table 2: Marketing practices adopted by rubber farmers

Sl No		Number of respondents	Percentage
1	Selling in the primary market	6	20.0

2	Sell to intermediaries	7	23.3
3	Selling through agent of rubber company	9	30.0
4	Cooperative marketing	8	26.7

Source: Field study

Primary market is the rural haat held once or twice in a week. Large number of buyers and sellers participate from the adjacent areas. In rubber marketing primary markets are the avenues where rubber growers can sell their latex directly to the buyers whether end user or intermediaries. Intermediaries play an important role in selling the latex to the ultimate buyer by procuring from the farmers. Since, the rubber market in Assam is unorganized in nature therefore, intermediaries helps the growers in the process of marketing. However, it can be noted that intermediaries extract a significant margin for their services, which is often exploitative in nature. Rubber companies as well as other manufacturers of rubber products collect their required inputs through the agents. These companies usually assigns area wise individual to collect the latex. It is helpful for the growers as it save their cost and trouble of market participation. In cooperative marketing rubber growers come together to sell their latex at a reasonable price to the prevalent intermediaries.

Impact of socio-economic factors on marketing practices

Age of the farmers and marketing practices

In order to analyze the association between age and marketing practices the following hypothesis are tested

H₀: There is no statistically significant association between age of the farmers and there marketing practices,

Table 3: Chi square test between age of the farmers and marketing practices

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	10.972 ^a	9	.278	.300	
Likelihood Ratio	14.647	9	.101	.243	
Fisher's Exact	10.394			.290	
Linear-by-Linear	2.023 ^b	1	.155	.181	.091
N of Valid Cases	30				

Source: Filed survey

As sig value (.278) is greater than the level of significance ($\alpha=.005$) so we could not reject the null hypothesis and therefore concluded that there is no significant association between the marketing practices and age of the farmers.

In order to analyse the association between income of the farmers and marketing practices the following hypothesis are tested:

H₀: There is no statistically significant association between income of the farmers and there marketing practices

As sig value (.268) is greater than the level of significance ($\alpha=.005$) so we could not reject the null hypothesis and therefore concluded that there is no significant association between the marketing practices and income of the farmers.

In order to analyse the association between literacy of the farmers and marketing practices the following hypothesis are tested

H₀: There is no statistically significant association between literacy of the farmers and there marketing practices

As sig value (.913) is greater than the level of significance ($\alpha=.005$) so we could not reject the null hypothesis and therefore concluded that there is no significant association between the marketing practices and literacy of the farmers.

In order to analyze the statistically significant association between the categories i.e. land holding status, the following hypothesis is tested,

H₀: There is no statistically significant association between category of the farmers and there marketing practices

As sig value (.648) is greater than the level of significance ($\alpha=.005$) so we could not reject the null hypothesis and therefore concluded that there is no significant association between the marketing practices and category of the farmers of the farmers

Based on the above analysis it can be state that socio-economic factors are not statistically significantly associated with marketing practices. In other words marketing practices are influenced by other factors than the socio-economic factors.

- It is observed that rubber productions as well as acreage are increasing in the recent years in the national as well as regional contexts.
- It is observed that 73.33% of respondents started rubber farming under the supervision of the Rubber Board. They avail supports in the areas of training and capacity building, seeds, fertilizer and marketing. Besides, they avail supports in the form of counseling and extension services etc. from the Board.
- It is observed that 66.67% respondents are dependent on hired labour for rubber farming.
- Price fluctuation is one of the major problems of selling latex in the rubber producing areas. Individual growers are unable to control the market price fluctuations.
- Expansion of the awareness campaign by extending its cultivation to the other suitable areas from the side of the Rubber Board is suggestive.
- Government can take measures for creation of adequate rubber latex market for convenience of the growers in the study region.
- Setting up of rubber research industry in Assam is another suggestive step of the present study.

CONCLUSION:

This study analysed the contemporary marketing practices of rubber growers in the Kamrup district of Assam. It is observed that rather than individual factors marketing practices are controlled by institutional factors. Rubber Board has played a significant role in the process of creating awareness for rubber farming and provides holistic support to the rubber growers. By considering its economic significance of the agrarian economy of the state, its acreage can be expanded to the other suitable areas.

REFERENCES:

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