

RETAIL CHAIN STORE: PRESENT SCENARIO IN SYLHET DISTRICT OF BANGLADESH

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Abstract

It was an attempt to examine the present scenario of retail chain store in Sylhet district of Bangladesh. Secondary data were collected from published books, various published articles, websites of different superstores etc. Primary data were collected from 100 customers during the months of September to October, 2016. Simple descriptive statistics and inferential statistics were used to analyze the data. The study depicts that most of the customers have positive perception. Highest discriminating power (DP) obtained for the second statement (located near to your residents) and lowest for the first statement (offer a wide variety of products). In case of favourableness and un- favourableness, 89 percent showed favoured attitude while 11 percent have disfavoured attitude. The correlation coefficient between age, income and distance were statistically significant at 10 percent and 1 percent level of significance. The KII identified six most prominent channels. Based on KII the most important channel identified is Farmer – Collectors – Supermarket - Consumers.

Keywords: Retail chain store, Present Scenario, Likert Scale, KII (Key informant interview), Sylhet-Bangladesh

INTRODUCTION

The rapid rise of supermarkets in the developing countries has been documented in various studies (Trail 2006, Dries et al. 2004, Reardon and Berdegue 2002, Reardon et al. 2003, Hu et al. 2004, Reardon and Hopkins 2006, Godron et al. 2004). In Bangladesh supermarkets have successfully made a breakthrough in the urban lifestyle with the idea of all essential commodities under one roof. From the concept of global retailers such as Wal-Mart, Safeway and Sears, some private organizations have established the retail chain store services in Bangladesh. Rahimafrooz Superstores Ltd. (RSL) was the first one to launch the first ever retail chain in Bangladesh in the year 2001. Retail trade is a traditional business in Bangladesh. Its expansion is keeping pace with the country's population growth and changes in consumption patterns which promote economic growth in Bangladesh. This expansion has not been structurally organized. Until recently, retail had never been perceived as an industry, but rather as an individual or family business with a very limited scope for organized expansion. Little to no market information is available on the retail sector, though industry sources indicate that the size of the food retail sector in Bangladesh could have been \$16 billion in 2010, and the number of retail grocery shops could number more than 1 million. Retail chain store is a large source of employment in Bangladesh (12 percent), and together with wholesaling it contributed a

combined 14.3 percent to Bangladesh's GDP in FY 2010-11. Retail and wholesale growth averaged over 7 percent in the last decade (BBS, 2011). At a strong rate of 15 percent annual sales growth, about 30 companies with more than 200 outlets already have ventured into the food marketing in Bangladesh. The annual turnover for supermarkets now stands at around BDT 15.0 billion (US\$192 million), according to the Bangladesh Supermarket Owners Association (BSOA). BSOA data also indicate that the retail market, which currently is worth about BDT 747.50 billion (US\$ 9.6 billion), is growing at an annual rate of 14 percent and will reach BDT 3027.25 billion (US\$ 38.8 billion) by 2021. Industry observers believe that the supermarkets will reach turnover of BDT 206.5 billion (US\$ 2.6 billion) by 2021 at an anticipated annual growth rate of 30 percent. This rise in the growth rate from 15 to 30 percent is expected due to changes in buying habits of Bangladesh's middle and upper classes, as well as government policies supporting growth of the supermarket segment, including repeal of the 30-percent tariff on imported cabinets, showcases, display counters, and refrigerators used in VAT-registered supermarkets. BSOA leaders also claim that they are offering a hassle-free shopping environment and hygienic commodities, thus earning the appreciation of middle and upper-class consumers. Organized retailers in the country currently are more focused on strengthening their backward linkages in supply chain, a challenge faced by retail chains for managing product availability. The most organized and disciplined retailers are trying to maintain their own supply chain management to bring fresh and quality products from farmers directly to stores in urban areas. There is a dearth of research work on the customers perception about supermarkets in Bangladesh (Alam and Rana 2013, Farouk 1987, Forid 2013, Azad 1992, Kashem 2012, Hasan 1979 etc.). Sylhet district was selected because supermarkets grow rapidly in this region over the last few years. The plausible reasons are higher income from foreign remittance, public and private institutions including educational institutions. Therefore, the study was undertaken to identify the socio-economic characteristics, customer's perception and marketing channels of supermarket. It is expected that this study will examine the entire spectrum of the supermarkets that will be helpful for the policy-makers to improve the marketing strategies and to forecast the future aspect of the supermarkets in the country.

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in Sylhet city in Bangladesh. The supermarkets located in Sylhet city were sampled. Sylhet was selected because it is a fast growing and highly populated urban town and the supermarkets have rapidly spread over the last few years. The large population implies that the city offers a huge market for food commodities compared to other towns. Data were collected from both primary and secondary sources. For primary data, a sample of 100

customers was selected by using mall intercept sampling technique through direct personal interview from the respondents during the month of September to October, 2016. Secondary data and other relevant information were collected from supermarkets reports, Journals, publications, Bangladesh Supermarket Owners Association (BSOA) and others. In order to achieve the objectives, descriptive statistics and inferential statistics were used.

Likert scale was used to examine perception of the customers about supermarkets. Predetermined opinions were presented to the respondents and the Likert scaling technique was used to rate the opinions. Each opinion was given a scale of one to five such as strongly agree takes a scale of 5, agree a scale of 4, neutral 3, disagree a scale of 2, and strongly disagree a scale of 1. For determining discriminating power (Ataur, 2015) the following formula was used:

$$DP=Q_3-Q_1$$

Where,

DP= Discriminating Power

Weighted total, (Q_3) =Score × Number who check that score

Weighted mean, (Q_1) = Weighted total/ Number in group

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Socio-economic Characteristics of customers

In this section, information about age, education, occupation, family size, income was considered to examine the socioeconomic characteristics. These aspects are important for the readers because it relevant to understand about the customer level of living, socio-economic environment in which they live and the nature and the content of their participation in economic activities. Some of the criteria of these socio-economic characteristics are discussed below:

Table 1. Socio-economic Characteristics of customers

Items	Percent of total	
Age group	18-25	21
	26-35	50
	36-45	16
	Above 45	13
Household Size	Up to 2	13
	3 to 4	48
	5 to 6	24
	Above 6	15

			Table 1...
Education level	Secondary	7	
	Higher Secondary	16	
	Graduate	36	
	Post Graduate	38	
	No Education	2	
Occupation	Student	12	
	Housewife	10	
	Govt. Employee	33	
	Business	20	
	Others	25	
Income	Above 15000	16	
	16000-30000	12	
	31000-45000	28	
	Above 45000	44	

Age group of customers

The selected customers were grouped into four categories according to their ages. The different age groups of the customers are presented in Table 1. The highest number of customers (50 percent) came from the age group 26-35 and the lowest customers (13 percent) came from the group above 45 years. It indicates that most of the sampled customer belonged to active age range in human life cycle. They always try to accept different taste and fashion throughout their life cycle. There might be close relation for the growth of supermarket with the age of the customers. Since 26-35 age group is considered more active and innovative in the life cycle stage. They prefer to accept the taste of supermarket. They think purchasing daily necessities from traditional market is more time consuming and at the same time it is quite difficult from them to judge the quality of product from traditional market. So this age group finds it accessible and profitable to go to supermarket.

Family size of customers

A family in the present study was revealed as a group of individuals living together, taking united and living under the control of one as its head. The family includes respondent himself or herself, husband, wife, sons, unmarried daughters, father and mother, brothers and unmarried sisters. The family size of supermarket customer was 13 percent for up to 2, 48 percent for 3 to 4, 24 percent for 5 to 6 and 15 percent for above 6 respectively. The larger the family size, the more pressing need to buy essential commodities for maintaining minimum social standard. In

that case the head of household find it more profitable to go to market where all the necessary are available under a single roof.

Education level of supermarket customer

Education plays a crucial role in development acceleration of a country. Table 1 shows different categories of customer according to the level of education. It is clear from the table that most of the customer completed their minimum level of education. The table 1 shows that 7 percent customer completed secondary level, 16 percent customer completed higher secondary level, 36 percent completed graduation, 38 percent are post graduate and 2 percent have no education. Educated people are highly time and health conscious. The educated people have to engage in diversified activities and remain busy all time. So they try to shop their necessities in a place which is hassle free and the same time prices of the essential are displayed like super shop.

Occupation of supermarket customers

The customers were engaged in various occupations. The major occupation of the customer was categorized into five groups. Most of the customers are government employee. The table 1 shows that 12 percent are student, 10 percent are housewife, 33 percent are government employee, 20 percent are business man and 25 percent are engaged in other works. Occupation indicates the social status of a person. There might be a positive relation between occupation and perception of supermarket growth. The people who work in higher class society have the status problem to shop in a place where bargaining exist. To avoid this problem they find it more comfortable to shop supermarket rather than traditional market.

Income level of supermarket customers

The table 1 shows the different income level of different customers. Table shows that most of the customer's income is greater than 45000 and it was 44 percent from the total respondents. The second higher income level is 31000-45000 which constitute the 28 percent of the respondents. In general the higher the income of the customer the higher the standard of living. In our country most of the people spent their income (about 40 percent of total income) mainly consumption purposes. Income has a positive relation with employment. In supermarket all kinds of essential are available than wet market. So the people prefer the supermarket to visit and purchase their daily necessities, which in turn accelerate the growth of supermarket.

Customers' perception about supermarket

To examine the customers' perception, five point Likert scale technique was followed here and ten statements were included to measure the perceptions (Table 2).

Table 2: Test of customer's preference by using Likert scale

Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Supermarket offer a wide variety of products	48	52	0	0	0	100
It is located near to your residents	26	48	3	12	11	100
Product price is reasonable	4	50	5	31	10	100
Product quality is better compared to other market	20	60	7	9	4	100
Car parking facilities are available	7	36	18	27	12	100
Store layout and atmosphere is favorable	24	52	10	9	5	100
It needs more promotional activities	10	66	8	14	2	100
It opens early in the morning	2	40	40	13	5	100
Staff members are not cooperative	3	9	1	54	33	100
It does not provide fast checkout	2	25	3	47	23	100

Table 2 shows the responses of the total number of respondents which were subdivided into strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree. In this five point continuum, weights of 1,2, 3,4,5 or 5,4,3,2,1 were assigned the direction of weighting being determined by the favorableness and un-favorableness of the item. The weights were assigned as follows: strongly agree, 5; agree, 4; neutral, 3; disagree, 2; strongly disagree, 1. In case of favorableness, if negative items (i.e. items indicating rejection) had been included in the scale; their weights would have been reversed. Statements 9 and 10 were negative for the context of supermarket.

Determining the Discriminative Power

After calculating the total score for each respondent, it was needed to determine a basis for the selection of items for the final scale. This work had been done with the method of Likert scale analysis. With item analysis each item is subjected to a measurement of its ability to

separate the highs from the lows. This is called discriminative power (DP) of the item (<http://psychologydictionary.org>).

Table 3: Computation of DP value

Group	Number	5	4	3	2	1	Weighted total	Weighted mean	DP(Q ₃ -Q ₁)
High 25 percent	25	17	8	0	0	0	117	4.68	0.40
Low 25 percent	25	7	18	0	0	0	107	4.28	
High 25 percent	25	14	11	0	0	0	117	4.68	1.92
Low 25 percent	25	1	10	1	5	8	66	2.64	
High 25 percent	25	3	15	2	3	2	89	3.56	1.20
Low 25 percent	25	0	6	2	12	5	59	3.26	
High 25 percent	25	12	12	1	0	0	111	4.44	1.16
Low 25 percent	25	1	15	2	4	3	82	3.28	
High 25 percent	25	6	11	4	4	0	94	3.76	1.36
Low 25 percent	25	1	5	4	8	7	60	2.4	
High 25 percent	25	13	11	1	0	0	112	4.48	1.64
Low 25 percent	25	1	10	6	3	5	71	2.82	
High 25 percent	25	3	20	0	2	0	99	3.96	0.84
Low 25 percent	25	1	13	1	8	2	78	3.12	
High 25 percent	25	2	9	12	1	1	85	3.4	0.60
Low 25 percent	25	0	7	10	4	4	70	2.8	
High 25 percent	25	1	0	0	10	14	111	4.44	0.92
Low 25 percent	25	1	6	1	12	5	88	3.52	
High 25 percent	25	0	3	0	15	7	101	4.04	1.28
Low 25 percent	25	1	12	0	7	5	78	3.12	

Supermarket offer a wide variety of Products

The most important factor constituting customer satisfaction is the variety of goods and services sold at retail chain stores. Customers are highly satisfied in a store where products of different brands are available. It is considered to be one of the important determinants of satisfaction. From table 3 it is seen that, weighted total and weighted mean for the high (25 percent) were 117 and 4.68, respectively. For low (25 percent) weighted total and weighted mean were 107 and 4.28, respectively. After calculation it was depicted that DP value was 0.4 meaning that customers shows less variation with the statements. Now a days almost all the necessary products are available in supermarket.

It is located near to your residents

Customers think deliberately when they want to purchase something from a particular store. They prefer shopping from convenient places where sufficient car parking facilities and other amenities are available. In the context of Sylhet city in Bangladesh location is a very vital factor

because there exists a large number of people. Huge traffic is a common scenario of this city now a day. So people want to buy goods and services from those stores where they can easily go and have their desired items with limited efforts. From table 3 it is seen that, weighted total and weighted mean for the high (25 percent) were 117 and 4.68, respectively. For low (25 percent) weighted total and weighted mean were 66 and 2.64, respectively. The table 3 shows that DP value for store location is 1.92, implies that super shop are not available at near to door.

Product price is reasonable

The pricing policy of retail chain stores can also greatly influence customers because price has the capability of attracting or repelling them (Krishna *et al.* 1998), especially since price functions as an indicator of quality (Lewis and Shoemaker, 1997). If the price is high, customers are likely to expect high quality, or it can induce a sense of being ripped off, (Carolyn and Saad, 2006). Likewise, if the price is low, customers may question the ability of the stores to deliver product and service quality. Moreover, due to the competitiveness of retail industry in Bangladesh, customers are able to establish internal reference prices. When establishing prices for products and services, an internal reference price is defined as a price (or price scale) in buyers' memory that serves as a basis for judging or comparing actual prices (Krishna *et al.* 1998). This indicates that the price offering for the item needs to be in accord with what the market expects to pay by avoiding negative deviation (i.e. when actual price is higher than the expected price). From table 3 it is seen that, weighted total and weighted mean for the high (25 percent) were 89 and 3.56, respectively. For low (25 percent) weighted total and weighted mean were 59 and 3.26, respectively. DP value for the product price is 1.2, meaning that the price charged by supermarket is reasonable and not conflicting to traditional market.

Product quality is better compared to other market

An important factor constituting customer satisfaction is the quality of goods and services sold at retail chain stores. Quality is the capacity of a product to satisfy some specific wants of the customers. Quality of products is normally measured by product features, benefits and ability to satisfy required needs and so on. It is considered to be one of the important determinants of satisfaction. From table 3 it is seen that, weighted total and weighted mean for the high (25 percent) were 111 and 4.44, respectively. For low (25 percent) weighted total and weighted mean were 82 and 3.28, respectively. The table 3 shows that DP value for the product quality is 1.16, meaning that supermarket offer better quality products compared to wet market especially fresh vegetables, meat, fruits, fish etc.

Car parking facilities are available

Car parking facilities is important for the customer satisfaction. In case of traditional market car parking facilities is quite insufficient. From table 3 it is seen that, weighted total and weighted mean for the high (25 percent) were 94 and 3.76, respectively. For low (25 percent) weighted total and weighted mean were 60 and 2.4, respectively. The table 3 shows that DP value for the car parking is 1.36. This is good indicator for customer satisfaction. Most of the supermarkets have their own parking zone in front of the shop. Customer can use these free facilities.

Store layout and atmosphere is favorable

The general appearance of the stores and the staff provides to some extent tangible cues about the quality of services that customers can expect. Such physical evidence reflecting the overall condition of a retail chain store and its facilities is deemed important by customers during the qualitative interviews. Eye catchy appearance of the stores can easily grab the attention of people. On the other hand stores can easily be identified by distinctive physical appearance. It takes little time for the customers to find out the stores if its design is unique. From table 3 it is seen that, weighted total and weighted mean for the high (25 percent) were 112 and 4.48, respectively. For low (25 percent) weighted total and weighted mean were 71 and 2.82, respectively. The table 3 shows that DP value for the store layout and atmosphere is 1.64, meaning that interior and exterior design and atmosphere is somewhat comfortable compared to traditional market.

It needs more promotional activities

Promotional activities is the another important factors for the growth and acceptance of supermarket product. In our country promotional activities related to supermarket is not sufficient. As a result people are not fully concern about supermarket. From table 3 it is seen that, weighted total and weighted mean for the high (25 percent) were 99 and 3.96, respectively. For low (25 percent) weighted total and weighted mean were 78 and 3.12, respectively. The table 3 shows that DP value for the promotional activities is 0.84, meaning that more initiatives need to undertake for familiarization of supermarket to the mass people.

It opens early in the morning

It is also an important factor for knowing about the customer perception of supermarket growth. Customer generally purchases their daily essential commodities early in the morning. From table 3 it is seen that, weighted total and weighted mean for the high (25 percent) were 85 and 3.4, respectively. For low (25 percent) weighted total and weighted mean were 70 and 2.8,

respectively. The table 3 shows that DP value for this statement is 0.6 that means most of the customers are aware of the opening time.

Staff members is not cooperative

It is identified as the willingness of the staff to be helpful, to provide prompt services to the customers and availability of all required items. Customers expect the stores to understand their needs and address them in a timely manner with the availability of necessary items all the time. When staff members are more responsive, attending to clients' needs quickly and with care and courtesy, it should result in improved customer satisfaction. From table 3 it is seen that, weighted total and weighted mean for the high (25 percent) were 111 and 4.44, respectively. For low (25 percent) weighted total and weighted mean were 88 and 3.52, respectively. The table 3 shows that DP value for the statement is 0.92, meaning that staff members are much cooperative and friendly.

It does not provide fast checkout

Generally the customers who buy from supermarkets have no enough time to spend due work pressure. They want to quick service in any aspect of life. As the supermarket is to establish to reduce the hasssle of life the staff members are willing to response promptly. . From table 3 it is seen that, weighted total and weighted mean for the high (25 percent) were 101 and 4.04, respectively. For low (25 percent) weighted total and weighted mean were 78 and 3.12 , respectively. The table 3 shows that DP value for the statement is 1.28, meaning that staff members provide fast check out after completing purchasing.

Favorableness and un-favorableness of consumers

From the calculation of the total score value of individuals, favorableness and un-favorableness of supermarket visit can be presented. The consumers were categorized into three groups: i. highly favored of supermarket (range value: 41-50), ii. Favored of supermarket (range value: 31-40) and iii. Un-favored of supermarket (range value: (20-23). Here, highest value of individual score can be 50 and lowest can be 10 because the number of items is 10. Table 4 presents that, 11percent respondents were in un-favorer of supermarket. Though the percentage of highly favored of supermarket were low (17percent), but maximum (72percent) were in favor of supermarket.

Table 4: Percentage of favorableness and un-favorableness of supermarket on the basis of individual score

Score	Particulars	No. of respondents	Percentage
41-50	Highly favored of supermarket	17	17
31-40	Favored of supermarket	72	72
20-30	Disfavored of supermarket	11	11
Total		100	100

Test of correlation coefficient

On the basis of collected data of the customers, a correlation was tried to found out among the socio economic variables such as age, sex, income, and distance and customer perception. Pearson correlation coefficient was estimated to measure the correlation and t test was performed by using the following formula to see whether the null hypothesis was rejected or accepted.

Test statistic, $t = \frac{r\sqrt{(n-2)}}{\sqrt{(1-r^2)}}$ with (n-2) df.

Table 5: Correlation coefficient analysis

Variables	Correlation coefficient	Level of significance
Customer perception and age	0.99	0.01***
Customer perception and sex	0.013	0.894
Customer perception and income	0.189	0.060*
Customer perception and distance	-0.258	0.01***

*, *** indicates significant at the level of 10 percent and 1 percent respectively

Correlation coefficient of customer's perception with age

The null hypothesis of the study was that, there is no correlation of attitude with the age of the respondents. Here the null hypothesis was rejected. Finally it was concluded that, age is statistically significant with the customer's attitude perception.

Correlation coefficient of customers perception with sex

The null hypothesis of the study was that, there is no correlation of perception with the sex of the respondents. Here the null hypothesis was accepted. Finally it was concluded that, age is statistically insignificant with the customer's perception.

Correlation coefficient of customer's perception with income

The null hypothesis of the study was that, there is no correlation of perception with the income of the respondents. Here the null hypothesis was rejected. Finally it was concluded that, income is statistically significant with the customer's perception on supermarket. Generally the higher the level of income of consumers the higher the positive perception.

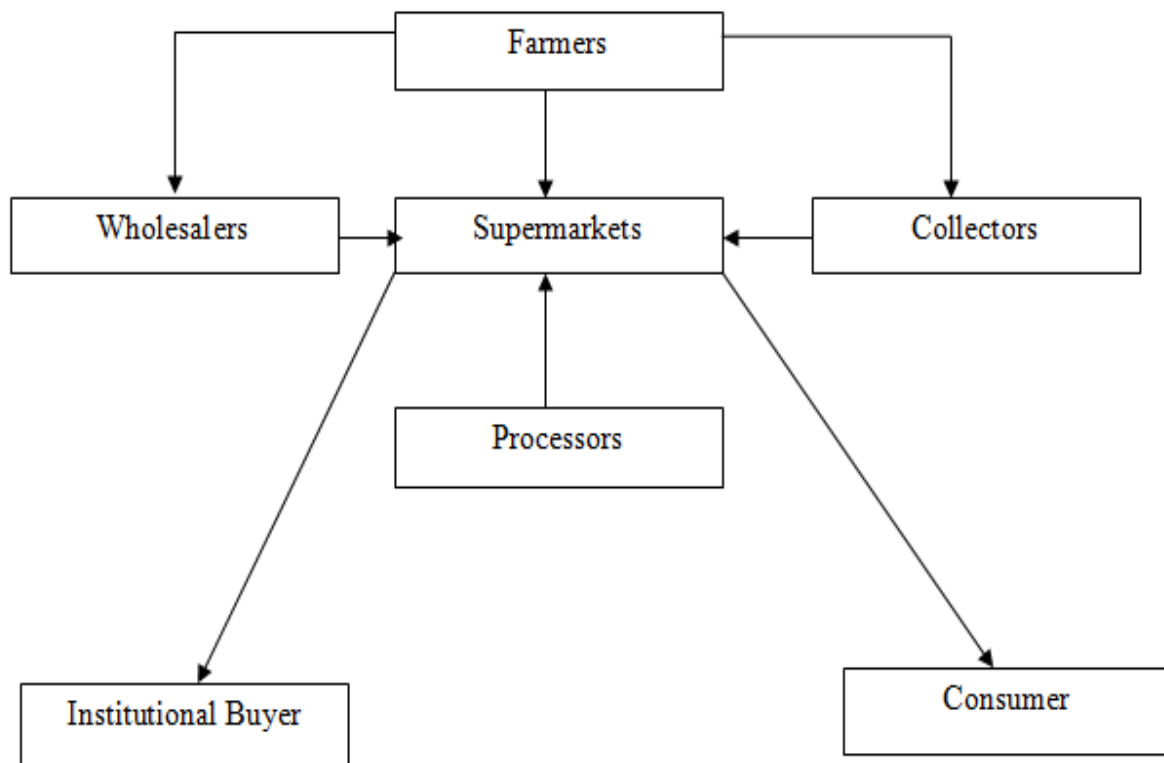
Correlation coefficient of customer's perception with distance

The null hypothesis of the study was that, there is no correlation of perception with the distance of supermarket. Here the null hypothesis was accepted. Finally it was concluded that, distance is statistically significant with the customer's perception on supermarket.

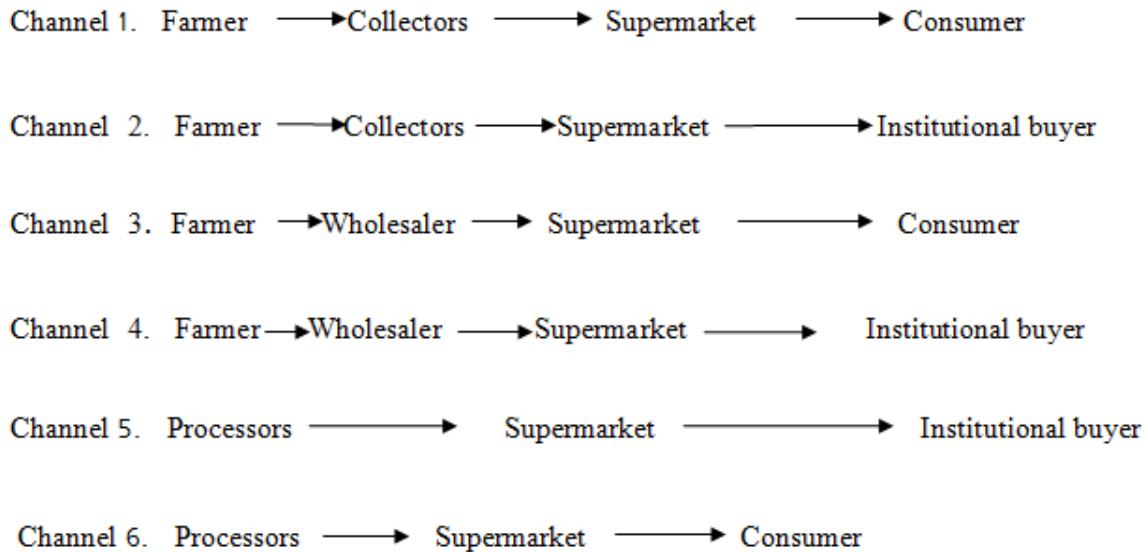
Marketing channels of supermarket

In the study area, a number of marketing channels were observed. A sketch of overall marketing channels for the study area is shown in the following figure:

Figure 1: Marketing channels of supermarket in Sylhet district



The marketing channels existed in the study area are as follows:



Market Intermediaries

A brief description of intermediaries participating in the marketing channels in the study area is given below.

Farmer

The farmer constituted the primary link of marketing channel. The farmers and various intermediaries formed linkages in the channels. Most of the farmers sold their product by using middlemen. Farmers sold cent percent of their produce directly to the supermarket.

Processors

Processors carry on their business on their own or on custom basis. Some processors employ agents to buy for them in the producing areas, store the produce and process it throughout the year on continuous basis. They also engage in advertising activity to create a demand for their processed products. Supermarket collect processed food such as chips, noodles, juice, butter, jelly, sauce etc. from different processors and agrobased industry in the study area.

Wholesalers

Wholesalers are those merchant middlemen who buy and sell food-grains in large quantities. They may buy either directly from farmers or from other wholesalers. They sell food-grains either in the super market or in other markets. They do not sell significant quantities to ultimate

consumers. They own godowns for the storage of the produce. In the study area supermarket collect their products from different wholesalers through their skilled collectors.

Collectors

Collectors are the employed specialized personnel. Collectors are responsible to supply the products into the supermarket on demand basis. The manager made the demand of necessary commodities day to day basis. The collectors collect the product from wholesaler, retailer, farmers and processors. Sometimes the collector frequently visits the different markets and also supplies fresh produce to the supermarket.

Consumer and institutional buyer

This is the last link of supermarket channels. Consumer visits the supermarket and buys their necessities from the supermarket. Supermarket also sold their products directly to different institutional buyers.

CONCLUSION

Supermarkets are newly established market phenomenon in the country. These provide a variety of goods and services under one roof. As the people are becoming time conscious and they do not have enough time for shopping, urban and semi-urban consumers prefer to buy all kinds of goods from the superstores. Moreover due to high level of awareness most of the educated customers now want to purchase the goods from a place where they find hassle free shopping environment. All these facilities are being offered by the supermarkets. Thus there is a need to understand the increasing trend of food retailing under supermarkets. Most of the sampled customers were in an active age group (50 percent within the age group of 26-35 years and 21 percent within the age group of 18-25 years). On an average the highest literacy rate of sampled consumer's was 38 percent. Whereas the national and Sylhet district's literacy rates are 51.8 and 45.59 percent, respectively (8). 33 percent sampled customers were involved in government job and 44 percent customer's income level is above 45000. Customers are highly satisfied about product assortments, staff members and opening time . On an average 89 percent customers shows the favoured attitude towards supermarket. Age and income is statistically significant with customers perception meaning that they had great influence on visiting the supermarket. As retail chain store business is gaining popularity very quickly, people engaged in this sector should pay special attention to the growth of this sector.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The main limitation of this study is that the retailers are spread all over the country but only Sylhet city has been taken into consideration. For collecting data from all over the country, a large amount of financial resources and huge time are required. The findings of the current study may be applicable only to the retailers (Supermarkets). Another limitation is that responses could be biased because the research is conducted in open market place where respondents' answers can be influenced by numerous variables such as mood, feelings and so on.

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