

Research Article

Identifying the Limitations and Strategies in Management of Date Marketing in Iran

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Abstract: The purpose of this study is analyzing the obstacles, limitations and strategies of date marketing in Iran. This study is of correlation kind having applied purposes. The statistical population includes 850 palm gardeners of Jiroft town which produced date in 2012. Using Cochran formula we selected 243 pal gardeners as sample data randomly. The instrument was a questionnaire which its reliability was verified by a group of experts and its validity by alpha Cronbach coefficient for different sections. The results showed that six factors including educational-informational, packaging and processing, price risks, weakness of basis, transportation and storing and supportive lacks are among the most important limitations of in management of date marketing explaining 57.25 of limitation variance. In factor analysis for strategies of marketing management, the results showed that seven strategies including improvement of educational and promotional programs, expansion of financial sources, packaging and processing, organizational development, improvement of transportation and determining the price explain 60.23 of strategies variance.

Keywords: Date marketing, educational-informational, finance, marketing management

INTRODUCTION

Regarding the importance of marketing in production and consumption of agricultural products, Iran lacks the necessary competency and efficiency due to facing with some problems including deficiency and high price of packaging, transportation problems, advertisement and communication deficiencies, shortage of consumption, not using advanced marketing techniques, long distance of farms and sale markets, high price and seasonal demand (Bolourian, 1998).

Main problems of Iranian date producers are instability of prices, lack of market information, needs and taste of consumers and low paid share of the price paid by consumers (Najafi and Kazemnejad, 2004). Date is one of the products in Iran that because of its surplus has a good potential for exporting but because of low quality, appeal of 30% of produced date faces with hygienic and economic problems. Also low consumption level of date in Iran shows that this product has not found its place food programs (Shajarian, 2002).

According to the Iran Agriculture Ministry (2009) the total land of cultivated palms to 2009 includes nearly 244 km² according to agriculture ministry. Production amount is one million tons that Jiroft and Kahnuj city have the highest production amount.

Previous surveys show that date producers do not take the real price of dates and buy their products to dealers with very low price. Also there isn't an efficient

system in collecting, packaging, transporting, storing, changing and producing in Iran. Due to variety of kinds and non-tradability, some kinds of this product don't have a market in Iran. So the main problem lies in the lack of an efficient marketing system causing palm gardeners not taking the real price of dates. So the issue of identifying the limitations and obstacles of date marketing in Iran aims to provide practical strategies to improve date marketing.

Hosseini (1998) regarded the unsuccessful policies of the government as the limitations of date marketing. These policies cause some problems like instability of business and financial rules, official beurocracy, not giving loans and facilities to traders, lack of familiarity with different techniques of marketing, lacking enough understanding of consumers, market, competitors and other influencing variables existing in the process of date exporting.

Shajarian (2002) regards lack of grading, packaging, appropriate transportation and custom duties as the main problems of date exporting in Iran. Increasing transportation services, processing, storing, packaging methods, educating the gardeners about the appropriate time of picking, completion of all marketing services by corporation unions, using low quality products in converging industries, making a system for market information in ministry of interior affairs to analyze the supply and demand information and price in different markets are among highlighted strategies.

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Tavassoli *et al.* (2007) regards some factors as the main problems of agriculture marketing in Iran such as inappropriateness of marketing facilities, price instability, seasonal production, inappropriateness of market information system, high cost of production and high amounts of wastage in different stages of production, presence of dealers and brokers and inappropriateness of government's support in expanding the market and marketing policies.

Wandschneider and Ngo (2006) considers market information as a permanent factor and a basic principle in making decisions on appropriate and punctual group efforts when getting access to market entries. So before starting any kind of group effort, farmers should collect and analyze the information related to their future business. Varea-Hammond (2004) regards a good product as the basic principle and starting point in every marketing plan.

Alexander *et al.* (2007) view, position and size of the farmer determines their access and distance to the market. The operation of future marketing is different based on the farmer's size. Great producers have more inclination to transport the goods to farther distances increasing their access to market but smaller producers show more inclination toward local markets.

Kraenzel (2001) considers the producers' skills in marketing to manage their staff precisely or perform the duties as obligatory conditions. Profits depend on punctual decisions based on comprehensive information and agreed upon periods and special conditions and contracts. So this condition opens work opportunities in the market.

Date marketing limitations can be categorized into internal and external limitations. Internal limitations emphasize the quality, packaging and processing of the products and external limitations emphasize the policies and marketing programming of agricultural goods. The present study aims at identifying and prioritizing the existing limitations and finding strategies to promote date marketing in national and international markets.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Regarding the paradigm the present research is quantitative, considering the wideness of research field it is survey study and regarding the type it is a correlation research. The present study is an applied research regarding the purposes. The present research has been done in a specified time limit so it is a cross sectional study. The participants include 850 of Jiroft palm gardeners who have produced date in 2012. Using Kokoran formula, 243 were selected randomly as sample of the study. The data were gathered through library study and field investigations. The instrument was a questionnaire whose face, content and construct validity were substantiated by panel of experts coming to coefficient Alpha of 0.87.

RESULTS

Limitations of date marketing in Iran: Considering the limitations of date marketing in Iran shows that the lack of packing and processing in the first place followed by waste in different stages of date producing, lack of farmers' knowledge to promote the quality of date, the variety of different kinds of date, mixing in the time of picking, low business value, low marketability and absence of educational and promotional classes in market management are the most important shortages shown in Table 1.

Exploratory factor analysis was used to categorize and identify the limitations of date marketing. To have an appropriate identification of data for analysis, KMO coefficient and Bartlett test were calculated showing that data was appropriate for analysis:

(KMO = 0.738; Bartlett's test = 2693, df = 351, sig = 0.00).

The results showed that six factors explain 57.24 of the limitations of date marketing. The most important factors are shortages in information and education explaining 12% of limitations and obstacles. In this factor, emphasis is put on not knowing the price, lack of information services in the area, not using experts and specialists, shortage of knowledge among producers and lack of promotional and educational classes in date marketing.

The second factor which is packing and processing explains 11.93 of variance of obstacles and limitations. This factor emphasizes that the lack of packaging and processing, lack of strategic plan in packaging, high amounts of wastes, lack of packaging facilities, high cost of buying packaging equipment, variety of produced kinds and decrease of product quality in the time of harvest are among the main limitations. The fourth factor with 2.21 special values explains 8.19 of limitations and obstacles. This factor is called price risk highlighting changes of price in market, lack of a specified and known price, different prices in market and numerous brokers and brokers.

The fifth factor which is called organizational weakness explains 8.19 of variance of limitations indicating lack of local corporations and societies to manage date marketing. The sixth factor which is transportation and storage explains 7.04 of variance and indicates that the lack of appropriate transportation systems and technical capability in storage make palm gardeners to sell their dates quickly. The seventh factor which is supportive factor explains 7.02 of variance of limitations indicating lack of government support in insurance and gardening services to prevent gardeners from pre-selling. The results are shown in Table 2 and 3.

Strategies of date marketing management: Exploratory factor analysis was used in order to classify

Table 1: Distribution of frequency and priority of viewpoints based on obstacles and limitations of date marketing

Obstacles	Mean	S.D.	CV	Ranking
Lack of packaging and processing decreases the possibility of suitable sale considerably	4.47	0.577	0.129	1
The wastes in different stages of date production are very high leading to a decrease in palm gardeners' profits	4.46	0.717	0.161	2
Farmers don't have enough knowledge of promoting the quality of their products	4.19	0.698	0.166	3
The variety of different kinds of date and their mixing when harvested decreases the quality of the product	4.23	0.794	0.188	4
Lack of influential societies for date marketing in the area is very obvious	4.14	0.782	0.189	5
Lack of strategic, comprehensive and practical program in processing has damaged agricultural products	4.12	0.793	0.192	6
Dealers prevent the clarification of date price	4.15	0.810	0.195	7
There are many dealers and brokers in date market	4.11	0.818	0.199	8
Lack of network transportation decreases the ability of farmers in both date selling and speed and quality	4.12	0.825	0.201	9
Lack of post-production information is observed among palm gardeners	4.3	0.850	0.211	10
Lack of proper markets in the area for produced date	4.05	0.849	0.212	11
Regarding the performance of corporation companies in past, farmers don't have inclination to sell their products to them	4.06	0.877	0.216	12
Pre-sale prevents receiving the real price of the product	4.05	0.897	0.222	13
The lack of farmers' packaging facilities is very obvious	4.26	0.958	0.225	14
Lack of technical ability in storage makes palm gardeners sell their product quickly	4.07	0.964	0.237	15
Productive farmers don't have updated price of date in national and international markets	4.06	0.971	0.239	16
Price vacillation in harvest is high	3.88	0.929	0.240	17
There are different sale price for date in the market	4.01	0.979	0.244	18
Political relationships are very important to consider marketing Iran's date overseas	3.81	0.931	0.245	19
There isn't information system for date sale markets in the area	4.06	1.008	0.248	20
Corporations are very inefficient in date marketing	3.97	1.006	0.253	21
Using agriculture graduates helps considerably in making purchase activities, marketing and selling date knowledge-based.	4.13	1.052	0.255	22
Receiving necessary finance from dealers males farmers to pre-sale their products	3.81	1.008	0.265	23
Providing and purchasing packaging equipment is expensive for palm gardeners	4.04	1.116	0.276	24
Lack of government support in loaning and insurance and gardening services is a serious obstacle for farmers	4.03	1.166	0.289	25
Lack of promotional and educational classes regarding the management of market is among the main limitations	3.70	1.184	0.320	26
Planted kinds in the area lack business value having a low marketability	2.76	1.318	0.477	27

Table 2: Extracted factors with eigenvalue, variance and cumulative percentage

Row	Factors	Eigen value	Variance	Cumulative percentage
1	Educational-informational	3.240	12	12
2	Packaging and processing	3.223	11.93	23.93
3	Price risks	2.918	11.04	34.97
4	Organizational weaknesses	2.213	8.19	43.17
5	Transportation and storage	1.902	7.04	50.21
6	Support	1.898	7.02	57.24

the strategies of date marketing management. Results showed that data were appropriate for analysis:

(KMO = 0.726; Bartlett's test = 2312, df = 276, sig = 0.00)

The results showed that six strategies explain 60.23 of date marketing management strategies shown in Table 4 and 5. The result showed the most important strategy in date marketing management is the improvement of educational and promotional programs explaining 14.73 of variance of strategies. This factor emphasizes that the expansion of educational and promotional classes in date marketing management, improvement of market information services, promotional programs, complete information about price and sale markets and applying other countries through transferring successful experiences are among the most important strategies to improve date marketing management. The second factor which is expansion of financial source explains 9.79 of variance of strategies.

This factor emphasizes the improvement of financial source for farmers to purchase packaging and processing equipment, providing necessary finance for producers in different times and government support for date producers in Jiroft town through production assistance.

The third factor is packaging and processing and with Eigen value of 2.23 explains 9.74 of variance of strategies. This factor indicates expansion of date processing industry in the area by private sector investment, presenting processed products with appropriate packaging to provide needs of different customers and appropriate product grading through machines. The fourth factor which is organizational development explains 9.39 of the variance of strategies and emphasizes on encouraging farmers to form organized agricultural groups, having a direct hand in marketing, introducing suitable market to palm gardeners by corporations and promotion and variety networks and promoting the quality of processed

Table 3: Factors' variables and coefficients of rotated matrix

Factor	Explanation	Coefficient
Educational- informational	Productive farmers don't have enough information about updated price in national and international markets	0.516
	Using agriculture graduates helps considerably in making purchase activities, marketing and selling date knowledge-based	0.570
	Farmers don't have enough information about quality promotion methods and promotional activities can solve this problem	0.746
	There isn't information service about the sale markets of date in the area	0.608
	Lack of post-production information is observed among palm gardeners	0.550
Packaging and processing	Lack of educational-promotional classes in market management is among main limitations	0.530
	Lack of packaging and processing decrease the possibility of marketing and suitable sale of the products	0.601
	Lack of strategic, comprehensive and practical program has damaged packaging and processing of agriculture products	0.552
	The wastes in different stages of date production are high causing decrease of farmers' profits	0.578
	Lack of packaging facilities for palm gardeners is very obvious	0.711
Price risks	Providing and purchasing packaging equipment is very expensive for palm gardeners	0.800
	Variety of different kinds of date and their mixing in harvest decrease the quality of product	0.607
	Price vacillations in harvest are high	0.740
	Dealers prevent the clarification of date price	0.841
	There are many dealers and brokers in date market	0.557
Organizational weaknesses	There are different selling price in the area.	0.564
	Corporations are very inefficient in date marketing	0.835
	Lack of influential societies for date marketing is obvious in the area	0.766
Transportation and storage	Lack of network transportation decreases the compatibility of farmers in date selling, speed and quality	0.662
	Lack of technical ability in storage makes palm gardeners to sell their product quickly	0.640
Support	Lack of government's support in loaning, insurance and gardening services is a serious obstacle for palm gardeners	0.630
	Receiving necessary finance from dealers make farmers pre-sale their products	0.643

Table 4: Extracted factors with eigenvalue, variance and cumulative frequency

Row	Factors	Eigen value	Variance of Eigen value	Cumulative frequency variance
1	Improvement of educational-promotional programs	3.53	14.73,1	14.73
2	Expansion of financial sources	2.35	9.79	24.53
3	Packaging and processing	2.33	9.74	34.27
4	Organizational improvement	2.25	9.39	34.67
5	Transportation improvement	2.16	9	52.68
6	Pricing	1.81	7.55	60.23

Table 5: Factors' variables and coefficients of rotated matrix

Factor	Explanation	Coefficient
Improvement of educational- promotional programs	More emphasis on promotional activities in marketing and teaching of date marketing methods	0.747
	Improving market information services through establishment of market information system in the town and the province	0.721
	A promotional- advertise program to introduce the product in national markets	0.716
	Proper and comprehensive information about main markets of date in different areas	0.676
	Giving information about the product price by gardening office of service center	0.611
Expansion of financial sources	Using the experiences of pioneer countries through holding educational-promotional classes	0.586
	Improving the availability of finance for palm gardeners to purchase packaging and processing equipment	0.635
	Providing needed finance for producers in different times	0.763
	Financial support of government for date producers by giving production assistance	0.623
Packaging and processing	Expanding processing and date industry by private sector investment	0.742
	Representing processed product with proper packaging to provide needs of different customers	0.810
	Proper grading of the product using appropriate machines	0.543
organizational improvement	Encouraging farmers to form organized agriculture groups and direct interfering in marketing activities	0.638
	Introducing proper market by corporations and promotion network to palm gardeners to sell their date	0.724
Transportation improvement	Variety in production by diversifying date kinds and processed products	0.622
	Making suitable basis for transportation of date to national and international markets with proper equipment	0.620
	Decreasing transportation problems and reservation	0.689
Pricing	Estimating the price of different kinds of the product at the beginning of rearing period and announcing it to palm gardeners	0.615
	Calculating the final price of the product by experts and logical pricing	0.711

products. The fifth factor which is transportation explains 9% of strategies variance. This factor highlights establishment of basis for date transportation to interior and external markets through suitable equipment and decreasing transportation problems. Finally the sixth factor which is pricing explains 7.55 of strategies variance and emphasizes on estimating the price of different kinds of products at the beginning of rearing period and giving it to palm gardeners, calculation of final price of products by experts and logical pricing.

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

Analysis of limitations of date marketing showed that educational-informational factor is the most important factor. The weakness of educational and information programs prevents the expansion of human source in agriculture sector and reduce the speed of change in society considerably. Considers promotion and education as one of facilitating services for producers and businessmen. He believes that those who act in production and marketing agricultural and livestock products should be taught constantly. Main ends of marketing educational programs are helping producers to understand the demands of the market and regulate their production and marketing based on it. Emadzadeh (2000) believes that there is a way for marketing producers to transfer the products to market, gaining information about market demands and concussively more income. Dealers who transfer the information between producers and consumers can creates more jobs and gain more income. So information system is very important in marketing procedure and this area is very weak in Iran. Singh (2001) also emphasizes the importance of promotion and education and considers marketing as activities where a desirable level of production is influenced by market condition and transportation of products from production places to consumption ones. He states the key role of a promotion operator to increase learning time for farmers to accept new techniques and increase the number of farmers who understand new ideas

Packaging and processing is the second limitation of date marketing management in the area emphasized by different studies. This shortage is emanated from farmers' inability to afford appropriate machines and lack of technical capability in storing and packaging which intensify each other. So to obviate this limitation, government financial supports and private sector investment are necessary. On the other side price risks which are observed nearly for all products in Iran is an important limitation. Appropriate pricing or guaranteed price can help to products marketing in a short period. Weaknesses in transportation, organization, storage and supportive ones are among other limitations of date marketing management. Najafi and Kazemnejad (2004)

counted the main problems of garden products in Iran as the lack of price stability, not having enough information about market, customers' needs and tastes and low share of producers from paid price by consumers. The results of the present research emphasized these limitations.

The results of the study showed seven strategies for date marketing management including the improvement of educational and promotional programs, expansion of financial sources, organizational expansion, transportation and pricing. Paykarjo (1998) believes that the most important role of agriculture promotion in the process of development is the expansion of human source and transfer of technology. Najafi and Kazemnejad (2004) believe that the role of promotion is in expanding the market information. Barik (2004) considers the role of marketing promotion in changing the view of needs and emphasizes some problems after harvest like storage, processing, transportation of food products and some special products needs education. Furthermore promotional information programs inform the producers about market conditions and price levels. Market promoting should be a chain among market, price information, research section and research centers and educational sections in marketing. It should insert the changes in views of producers and marketing operations in farms. Local consultation can be based on common methods so promotion can't make basic changes in marketing methods from the beginning.

The second strategy is the expansion of financial source. Monetary shortage prevents palm gardeners to purchase packaging and processing machines and expand storage infrastructures. Finance has an important role in improvement and expansion of marketing system because market factors like producers, dealers, wholesalers and retailers need finance to improve their jobs. Also farmers need financial sources to improve production condition and other factors to gather, transfer, storage, package and sell their products. Currently due to financial shortage palm gardeners are made to sell their date with a low price before or in the time of picking. Donating financial resources can assist them but taking finance from official sources is limited and difficult. Gardeners are made to take loan from non-official sources with high interest rate or don't invest adequately in this area. Packaging and processing, organizational improvement, transportation and pricing are among other important factors which are related to other strategies. Packaging and processing are related with the expansion of financial resources and organizational expansion is related with the expansion of educational programs.

The following are some suggestions to improve the date marketing management in Iran rising from the results of the present study:

- To introduce a date economic number in the area in order to homogenize products and increase their marketability
- To form a gathering network by business and agriculture offices to prevent wastes of products in harvest time and assist its marketing emphasizing global markets.
- To form local information system about sale markets and price of different kinds of products through newspapers and brochures and holding agricultural product fairs in town and province
- To provide capacities and capabilities for palm gardeners for expanding marketing societies in the area through managerial and organizational educations
- Promotion and agricultural education sections should assess educational needs and promote their educational programs about date marketing management
- To donate low interest loans and facilitate gardeners' access to official finances to enable them to purchase packaging and processing equipment
- To present a guaranteed and fair price for different kinds of date by operator organizations like village corporations and agriculture service centers to decrease the risks.

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