

Indigenous Haats and its Quality Assessment: Evidences from Garo Hills, Meghalaya

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ABSTRACT :

The quality of haat motivates the basic functionaries of haat system which come through the level of perceived satisfaction availed by the buyers and sellers in the conduct of a regional haat. Buyers and sellers roam from one haat to another haat and they are capable of giving better judgment on the conduct of haats in any region. However, the performance of regional haats and experiences of buyers and sellers on the conduct of operation have a direct impact on them which is derived through the level of satisfaction and performance of the haats, basically the operating, market infrastructure, location along with better communication and transportation are the prime motivators for buyers and sellers in the conduct of regional haats. Hence the intention in this paper is to find out the level of perceived satisfaction obtained by the buyers and sellers on the conduct of regional haat operating in the Garo Hills of Meghalaya. The regional haats is directly affected by the level of satisfactions perceived by the buyers and sellers and that of overall development of haats is an outcome of this level of satisfaction that customers and sellers obtained from a regional haats in Garo Hills of the Meghalaya.

Key words : *Hatts, perceived satisfaction*

INTRODUCTION :

A Haat in the hilly regional area is one of the important ways to connect people physically with each other and also with outsiders in the form of buyers and sellers. A haat in the hilly area is very important for producers whose economic subsistence is based on agricultural products and collection of forest produce. It plays a very important role for the livelihood of hilly people, which fulfills the demand for and supply of goods on a regular basis. The main indispensable functionaries in a haat though basically consumers and sellers,

however, in view of participants, they are grouped into consumers, traders, administrators and bystanders as a common criteria of people are available in any indigenous haat in India. Apart from that the population or number of villages would be more in the location of a haat, but the more important factor to run a haat in that locality is the attended number of consumers and sellers. Moreover, the choice of the consumers to visit a particular haat is determined by some other factors viz, nearness to the haat, easy accessibility, availability of products, size of the haat, social and cultural background, per capita income, frequent needs, geographical space, etc. which decide the mobilization of consumers to the haat. The consumers are aware about the market day and participate in the market and do purchase activities according to their choices and according to their level of knowledge. It is only on the special occasion that, the consumers travel distant market centre for meeting the requirement of their social, cultural, religious and administrative needs (Skinner, 1964). Sellers who are the most significant participants forming the central level of the weekly haat are in fact the controllers of the weekly haat marketing system. The gathering of a large number of individual sellers always invites potential customers in a weekly haat. The greater the gathering, the more people are attracted to join the market (Ravi, 2016).

A haat is how much develop in the regional areas is indicated by the provision of participants' level of satisfaction achieved by a haat in a particular locality. The scenario of a hilly area regional market in the NE region is basically base on certain facilities and services available and these facilities are provided by the an organised body which is known as market committee and again which is regulated by the state government or autonomous body of the state. Among them market regulation committee is the main body to take care the operation of the haats. The basic requirements in the haats are the basic infrastructure which needs to run a haat, such as sufficient space, market sheds for temporary sellers, sufficient space for permanent shops and buyer supporting infrastructures such as toilets, water, proper communication space which is the common in a haat. The objective of success in organising a good conduct of regional haat is based on the level of customers' satisfaction which creates a bonding relationship between haat and the participants of the haats. Therefore on the basis of this success, a haat can motivate more participants (customers, shop keepers, etc.) and inflow of variety of products to fulfil the demand of the diverse groups of people in the haat as well as people of the region. This also extends an avenue for the purpose of overall development of the region.

Though issue of satisfaction to participants especially in the hilly region haat is a demand-driven and this is a common phenomenon that takes place in any market. However, there are certain common factors which any local haat has to provide to achieve the satisfaction level of their participants in the haat. The participatory method which is rapidly gaining acceptance as a better measure of success in extension service delivery has been used to measure the buyers and sellers satisfaction (Hall et al., 2000; Birner et al., 2006; Birner and Anderson, 2007; Kokate et al., 2009). However, the question raised in this study

is whether or not, the regional hilly area haats able to deliver satisfaction services to those who are participate in the haats of Garo Hills, Meghalaya. The observed dearth of empirical information on the level of satisfaction of participants in Garo Hills and possible effect of certain socio-economic characteristics of customers on their perception of the level of satisfaction` services rendered to them are the thrust of this study.

LITERATURE REVIEW :

One of the main reasons underlying the exploitative markets was the heavy indebtedness of the communities to the zamindari traders. Moreover, due to the geophysical conditions and lack of infrastructure facilities and absence of institutional arrangements including co-operatives, the rural markets were highly localized and hence, the market instruments such as pricing, backward and forward linkages, demand and supply of commodities have always turned to the disadvantage of the communities (Rajagopal, 2005).

Shifting cultivation is extensively practiced by the indigenous people on the hill and slope areas. They also collect minor forest produces, rear animals, involve in hunting and making bamboo products and labour works. The tribal women live their life on par with the males sharing in all the work. Most of the tribal males and females smoke and chew tobacco, betel nut, and betel leave. They live far from the towns and they don't have proper transportation & marketing facilities to their villages. They wholly depend on the weekly markets and their numbers in such markets are more for selling and buying of commodities. Therefore, weekly markets are very important to the lives of tribal people for selling and buying of products (Ravi, 2016). Another study by Borthakur (1993) in Meghalaya which is a tribal state found that periodic markets in Meghalaya operate in two ways namely vertical and horizontal. The researcher also made a comparative study between the periodic markets of Assam and the periodic markets of Meghalaya.

In another study, Rajagopal (2009) opined that shopping malls in India contribute to business more significantly than traditional markets. Shopping malls attract customers providing enough time to make choices. Shopping malls are also recreational means of shopping. However, competition between malls and traditional shopping centers has led mall developers and management to consider alternative methods to build enthusiasm in customers. Though the regulated markets in the country has increased but in the state the number of regulated market is less compared to other states in the country (Bhatia, 1999).

Periodic market of Cherrapunjee in Meghalaya is the main distributor of goods and services to the entire (Jaintia Hills) region. However, this traditional market suffers from multiple problems, so it is incumbent upon the state government to strengthen and improve the traditional market. Therefore, it is also highly recommended that top-down approach should be adopted where the state government should look after the welfare of the tribal market with the full cooperation and co-ordination of local Syiem and the Dorbar authorities (Ryngnga & Ryntathiang, 2012).

From the above reviews, we can contemplate that indigenous market or indigeneous haat play an important role towards the welfare of tribal populace. The present study will try to identify the characteristics of an indigenous haat of garo hills in Meghalaya

Objectives of the Study :

The following objectives have been framed for the present study

1. To explore the perceived determinants of the level of satisfaction of customers on local haats.
2. To explore the perceived determinants of the level of satisfaction of sellers on local haats.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY :

Study Area :

Garo Hills Region is located in the western part of the state Meghalaya. The region comprises of five districts, seventeen Community Development Blocks and 7154 villages of the state respectively are dominating by the local tribal people excluding the plain belt of the region. It is bordered in the south and west by Bangladesh and north by Assam and east by Khasi Hills. With average daily temperature ranges from 17oC to 27oC, the vegetation of the region is mainly hilly forests with large area of rain forests, and deciduous forest. The agricultural sector forms the base of the overall development thrust of the region with farming as the main occupation of the people in the region. Crops largely grown especially food grains, spices, seasonal vegetables, seasonal fruits and forest products and cash crops are also practiced. As obtainable in other states of the country, regional haats are occupied by all these produced and also manufactured products available in the country.

Sample Size and Sampling technique used :

A two stage Simple random sampling technique was employed in the study. In the first stage, 450 sellers, bifurcating 30 sellers from each regional haat out of the total of 15 haats were randomly selected across the five districts of the region. Opinions were collected from the sellers about the haats' quality and their satisfaction level in conducting their selling businesses in the haats. The second stage also includes 450 buyers opinion bifurcating 30 buyers from each regional haats out of the total 15 haats which were selected to collect their basic information and opinion about the level of satisfaction provided by these haats to them.

Analysis of Data :

Primary data was obtained with the use of interview schedule. The data were analysed using descriptive statistics and through multiple regression analysis. Frequency

of the data counts, percentage and means were used to describe the perceived characteristics of buyers as respondents. A five point Likert scale was used to elicit information on the level of satisfaction of regional haats to the respondents which include both buyers and sellers opinion respectively. The respondents both buyers and sellers were required to indicate the extent to which they satisfy or dissatisfy with carefully constructed statements which depicted their perception on the level of satisfaction of regional haats services, availability of products, infrastructures development, prices and communication and transportation easiness to them to participate in the haats.

The scale was constructed as follows: Highly dissatisfy=1, dissatisfy=2, neutral or moderately satisfy=3 satisfy= 4 and highly satisfy =5. A mean score was obtained for each respondent including both buyers and sellers and adopted as a measure of the level of satisfaction of haats' quality and performance in providing services to them (Likert, 1932; Hoover, et al. 2009). The multiple regression analysis using the ordinary Least Square method was employed to investigate the effect of selected perceived characteristics of buyers in a common haat on their perception of the level of satisfaction on the conduct of haat in the region. The choice of this model was based on its proven adequacy to understand the opinion given by the buyers in a Likert scale (the dependent variable) and buyers perceived characteristics in a haat which include certain number of factors count as responsible in giving individual opinion called independent variables or regressor or predictor variables in situation where there is the need to predict the value of relationship between or among the dependent and independent variables. According to Berger (2003), the regression model in its explicit form is given as :

$$Y_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_{1i} + \beta_2 X_{2i} + \beta_3 X_{3i} + \dots + \beta_n X_{ni} + e_i$$

Where, Y_i is the Dependent Variable, β_0 is the constant term β_1 to β_3 are coefficient relating to p explanatory variables of interest and e_i is the error term. The measurable variables are given in the form of X_{1i} to X_{ni} be the factors of perceived characteristics of buyers in the conduct of haats as collected from the region. These variables are arranged as :

Y = is the perceived level of satisfaction of the buyers measured by mean scores from a Likert scale.

X_1 = age of buyers measured in years

X_2 = Gender measured as a dummy variable, 1 for male and 2 for female.

X_3 = Education level of buyers measured as an ordinal scale 1 to 5 from primary to degree or more.

X_4 = Frequency of buyers market visits as a dummy variable, 1 for regular and 2 for irregular

X_5 = Annual income of buyers measured in terms of money value.

X_6 = Types of Shops measured in ordinal scale 1 for open shop, 2 for market shed 3 for temporary shop and 4 for permanent shop

X_7 = Time duration of haat visits by buyers measured in hours

X_8 = Types of products purchased by buyers 1 for agricultural products 2 for non-agricultural products and 3 for both agricultural and non-agricultural products

X_9 = Mode of transportations buyers uses to visit haats measured in an ordinal scale.

X_{10} = Sellers opinion about the regional haats measured by means score from a Likert Scale with the similar variables for sellers.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION :

Characteristics of Visiting Buyers :

Table-1 as provided in (Annexure-I) presents the selected characteristics of buyers visiting the indigenous haats in the study area. The results reveal that the modal age group of the respondent buyers was 30-50 and the percentage share was 90 percent. However, the minimum age of 30 years age was more in the total number of participants in the haats. The majority of the respondents (66.22 percent) were women. The education level for most of the respondents was below higher secondary and most of them were regular visitors (85.78 percent) in the haats. Most of the buyers are in the income group of Rs. 20 thousand to Rs. 40 thousand which includes 78.45 percent of the total respondents in the study area. Data also included the types of shops available in the haats and among them temporary shops including temporary shops inside the market sheds are more which includes more than fifty percent of the total shops in the indigenous haats.

The conduct of indigenous haat and participation of buyers and the level of satisfaction derived is also the impact of the indigenous haats on the buyers that adds to overall performance and quality of the haats. The product-wise buyers for agriculture and non-agriculture products are more compared to buyers for both the categories. The reason is that most of the buyers either come to buy vegetables or to buy grocery items as many of the buyers have sufficient cultivated vegetables in their house and they need only the grocery items.

Customers' level of satisfaction on the conduct of indigenous Haats in Garo Hills :

Table 2
Distribution of Respondents by mean scores on the perceived level of Satisfaction on the conduct of Regional Haats in Garo Hills

Customers' Level of Satisfaction	Frequency	Percentage No. of Respondents
0-1	3	0.67
1.01-2	216	48.00
2.01-3	182	40.44
3.01-4	49	10.89
Total	450	100

Source : Field survey

The perceived level of satisfaction of customers is presented in the Table-2. The opinions of the respondents are arranged on a five point Likert Scale where a respondent can score minimum 10 points to maximum 50 points on any scale of 10 variables. The results reveal that customers perceived level of satisfaction in the conduct of the regional haats in the region is poor. The result shows that only 10.89 percent of the customers perceived level of satisfaction favoured the conduct of haats in the region positively. About half of the customers disagreed that the conduct of regional haats in the region is adequately enough to them while 40.44 percent customers were indifferent.

Table 3
Perceived determinants of the level of satisfaction of Customers on Local Haats in Garo Hills

Statements	Total Respon- dent	SD	D	U	A	SA	Respo- nse Avg.
My opinion is sought on choice of locating the Haat is ideal	450	0 (0.0)	201 (44.7)	100 (22.2)	145 (32.2)	4 (0.9)	2.9
My opinion is sought on choice of availability of products in the Haat	450	2 (0.4)	377 (83.8)	64 (14.2)	7 (1.6)	0 (0.0)	2.2
My opinion is sought on availability of Haat infrastructure	450	206 (45.8)	219 (48.7)	24 (5.3)	1 (0.2)	0 (0.0)	1.6
My opinion is sought on prices for Branded products are not varied from MRP	450	24 (5.3)	171 (38.0)	85 (18.9)	160 (35.6)	10 (2.2)	2.9
My opinion is sought on residential distance of the Haat is too far	450	72 (16.0)	116 (25.8)	82 (18.2)	139 (30.9)	41 (9.1)	2.9
My opinion is sought on haat fulfils necessary requirement for all type of customers	450	275 (61.1)	157 (34.9)	7 (1.6)	11 (2.4)	0 (0.0)	1.5
My opinion is sought on price for local products are varied from haat to haat	450	73 (16.2)	153 (34.0)	72 (16)	118 (26.2)	34 (7.6)	2.7
My opinion is sought on haat suffers from inadequate management	450	121 (26.9)	299 (66.4)	29 (6.4)	1 (0.2)	0 (0.0)	1.8

My opinion is sought on organisation of haat is very important	450	0 (0.0)	6 (1.3)	23 (5.1)	320 (71.1)	101 (22.4)	4.2
My opinion is sought on products' demand more than supply of products in the haat	450	4 (0.9)	23 (5.1)	20 (4.4)	377 (83.8)	26 (5.8)	3.9

Notes : SD (strongly disagree); D (disagree), U (undecided); A (agree); SA (strongly agree) source: Field survey

The results in the Table-3 show that about half of the opinion of customers in regard to the place of conduct of haat is adequately not enough. Similarly the choice of products in the haats is not sufficient for all type of customers. To develop the haats more infrastructures is required for sellers and also to the haats. However, the price control for products in the haats varies even for the branded products whose MRP is printed are also priced at different rate. Moreover, 61.1 percent customers' opinion is that haats are not sufficient with variety of products for all type of customers and also there are no sufficient shops with different products for different type of customers. The organisation of haats is required to be improved for smooth conduct of haats in the region as most of the customers' opinion shows that organisation of haats is the most important for the benefit of customers as well as shop keepers in the haats. The distance of haats is manageable for customers as the opinion for distances is a mixed response. Those who stay near the haats did not agree that haat is too far whereas those who stay far, again they agreed that haat is too far at a distance for them.

Even than improvement in rural roads is an important part of infrastructure development as it affects agricultural development and also the development of social services (Satish, 2007). In the study, a good number of customers agreed that supply of products in the haats is less compared to the demand of products in the haats.

Table 4
Perceived determinants of the level of satisfaction of Sellers on Local Haats in Garo Hills

Variables	Total Respondent	SD	D	U	A	SA	Sellers Avg. Response
My opinion is sought on availability of Haat infrastructure	450	142 (31.56)	283 (62.89)	25 (5.56)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	1.74
My opinion is sought on prices for Branded products are not varied from MRP	450	2 (0.44)	170 (37.78)	100 (22.22)	168 (37.33)	10 (2.22)	3.03

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My opinion is sought on haat fulfils necessary requirement for all type of customers	450	12 (2.67)	404 (89.78)	22 (4.89)	12 (2.67)	0 (0.0)	2.07
My opinion is sought on price for local products are varied from haat to haat	450	73 (16.22)	152 (33.78)	72 (16.00)	118 (26.22)	35 (7.78)	2.75
My opinion is sought on haat suffers from inadequate management	450	44 (9.78)	385 (85.56)	21 (4.67)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	1.95

Notes : SD (strongly disagree); D (disagree), U (undecided); A (agree); SA (strongly agree) source: Field survey

A similar type of opinions was also tested with the sellers in all the 15 haats in the region with five important variables for haats and they responded almost in the same manner as the customers responded. 62.89 percent sellers have given opinion that the infrastructures in the haats are not enough for the conduct of haats (Table-4). 85.56 percent of sellers disagreed with the present management of regional haats their expectation is the get better management of the haats and also the price control and availability of variety products by providing the opportunity for opening new shops with new type of products whether permanent or temporary shops in the haats.

Determinants of Customers' Satisfaction on the conduct of Indigenous Haats in Garo Hills :

The determinants of customers' perception of satisfaction and the results are presented through a regression analysis in Table-5. The dependent variable in the regression model as mentioned above was customers' perception of satisfaction on the conduct of regional haats in Garo Hills of Meghalaya. The predictors or independent variables were customers' age, genders, education, frequency of market visits, annual income of customers, type of shops available in the haats, time duration of visit, types of purchase of products, mode of transportation and sellers opinion. The regression analysis was carried on with multiple regression model with the above ten predictors and it produced $R^2 = 0.315$ $F(10,439) = 20.188$; $P < 0.000$. Although the results of R^2 reports that the variables account for only about 32 percent of the observed variations in the customers' perception of satisfaction on the conduct of regional haats, however, the presence of statistically significant predictors make it possible to draw conclusions from the analysis. The predictor variables had shown significant weights and accounted for 32 percent of the variations observed in the customers' perception of the level of satisfaction on the conduct of regional haats in Garo Hills.

Table 5
Results of Regression Analysis to identify determinants of Customers' satisfaction on the conduct of Regional Haats in Garo Hills

Variables	Unstandardized Coefficients			
	B	Std. Error	T	Sig.
(Constant)	1.674	0.107	15.705	0.000
Age of Buyers	-0.004	0.015	-0.239	0.811
Gender of buyers	0.021	0.021	1.000	0.318
Education	-0.047*	0.013	-3.519	0.000
Frequency of Market Visits	-0.002	0.029	-0.057	0.955
Annual Income of Buyers	-0.002	0.009	-0.191	0.848
Type of Shops	0.008	0.010	0.832	0.406
Time Duration of Visit	0.007	0.008	0.881	0.379
Types of Purchase of products	0.014	0.015	0.923	0.356
Mode of transportation of buyers	0.024	0.015	1.593	0.112
Sellers' Opinion(Likert Scale)	0.400*	0.030	13.200	0.000

$R_2 = 0.315$ F (10,439) = 20.188; $P < 0.000$, 1%*

The results of regression analysis implies that the determinants of customers' satisfaction in the conduct of regional haats, where age of buyers, education level, market visits and annual income were negatively influenced their perception at $p < 0.000$, which indicates an inverse relationship between the satisfaction of customers and the conduct of regional haats in the area. It results that the higher these four variables the lower the level of satisfaction on the conduct of regional haats in the area. The results also show that the opinion given by the sellers and the buyers (customers) are significant at 1 percent level P-values. The conduct of regional haats in the Garo Hills positively related with the awareness among the customers. The performance in the conduct of regional haats in the area is more when the awareness is less among the customers and vice versa.

Conclusion :

The study concluded that the level of satisfaction in the conduct of indigenous haats in Garo Hills is poor as perceived by the customers as well as different sellers in the haats. The performance to be provided for satisfaction to customers and sellers need a good conduct of the indigenous haats, which is required to improve infrastructures of the haats, management and secured operational activities in order to increase the demand and supply of products as well as gathering of people in the haats of the region. A good conduct of haats can motivate more buyers and sellers which are the basic functionaries of a haat.

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Annexure – I

Table 1
Characteristics of Perceived visiting buyers in the Regional Haats

Variables	Frequency	Percentage %
Age of Buyers :		
?30	206.00	45.78
31-50	199	44.22
>50	45	10.00
Gender of buyers :		
Male	152	33.78
Female	298	66.22
Education :		
?Primary	249	55.33
Primary-Metrics	157	34.89
Metrics-Higher secondary	29	6.44
Higher Secondary-Degree	15	3.33
>Degree	0	0.00
Frequency of Market Visits :		
Regular	386	85.78
Irregular	64	14.22
Annual Income of Buyers :		
?20000	178	39.56
20000-40000	175	38.89
40000-60000	44	9.78
60000-80000	36	8.00
?100000	17	3.78

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Type of Shops :

Open shop(without shed)	58	12.89
Inside the Market shed	152	33.78
Temporary shop	98	21.78
Permanent shop	142	31.56

Time Duration of Visit :

2-3 hours	191	42.44
3-4 Hours	153	34.00
4-5 Hours	24	5.33
5-6 Hours	55	12.22
above 6 Hours	27	6.00

Types of Purchase of products :

Agriculture	177	39.33
Non-agriculture	208	46.22
Both	65	14.44

Mode of transportation of buyers :

Walking	146	32.44
Own Vehicle	239	53.11
hired vehicle	65	14.44
Sellers' opinion (Likert scale)	450	2.31

Source: Primary Data