

Focus Group Discussion (FGD) on the Business Challenges and operational issues of Textile Owners in Textile Market A Qualitative Study

Nalini Palaniswamy¹, Muruganandam Duraiswamy²

¹Assistant Professor, Department of management studies, Kumaraguru College of Technology

²Associate Professor, Department of management studies Bharathiar University Post Graduate Extension Centre

Corresponding Author: Nalini Palaniswamy

Abstract: The Erode power loom cluster has grown in terms of volume, value and variety over the last few decades and has become one of the active markets for cotton goods in the country. However, over the last few years the cluster has lost its prideful place due to labour shortage, obsolescence and margin erosion. To overcome these problems, and to erase the 'low quality' image of the cluster and make it look attractive even for the quality conscious buyers the integrated textiles mall infrastructure was build up by public private partnership in the name of Texvalley. Primary focus of Texvalley was to benefit the small and medium textile manufacturers and traders, as it would bring in all the weekly markets in Erode under a single roof. Mainly they aim at offering a platform for textile owners who are presently doing their business in the weekly shandies in three locations in the city namely the Gani market, central theatremarket and Ashokapuram market. Even with world class facility and many positive factors it was found the occupancy in Texvalley is comparatively low. The major occupant's for Texvalley is situated in all the above mentioned 3 markets. Hence, the proposed study focused to understand the business challenges and operational issues concerned in one of the market named Gani market. The data was collected through Focus group discussion in order to understand the predetermining factors of their challenges and operation risks concerned. The results of the study were tabulated and presented for further in-depth study.

Date of Submission: 14-09-2018

Date of acceptance: 29-09-2018

I. Introduction

The Texvalley is integrated textile marketing market. The marketing complex was established as a public-private partnership initiative under the Comprehensive Power Loom Cluster Development Scheme of the central and state textile ministries. This textile mall is considered to be the India's Largest wholesale textile market located in Erode, the heart of South India's textile industry. It showcases the wholesale and retail textile business to buyers from across the world. The Erode textile belt is a combination of two business endeavor's coming together - the "manufacturing" and the "trading". The manufacturing clusters with more than 150000 looms and processing units lying within a radius of 70 km manufacturing products like dhotis and lungies, yarn dyed fabrics, Grieg, bed linen and accessories to the turnover of over Rs.4000 crores. The vision of this integrated textile market was to transform the region into a thriving textile hub by doing business with a whole new perspective

The Erode power loom cluster has grown in terms of volume, value and variety over the last few decades and has become one of the active markets for cotton goods in the country. However, over the last few years the cluster has lost its prideful place due to labour shortage, obsolescence and margin erosion. To overcome these problems, and to erase the 'low quality' image of the cluster and make it look attractive even for the quality conscious buyers the integrated textiles mall infrastructure for textiles was built by PPP. Which mainly focused on creating linkages with national and export markets, ensuring patronage of 'quality-seeking' buyers, reducing role of middlemen and shifting competition from price-based to design, variety, quality, time and differentiation based. Texvalley was conceived as an intervention that will address the above issues by bringing a fundamental change in the way business is done and position the Erode Power Loom Cluster back on rails so that it can grow and achieve its full potential. Even though it was a disruptive innovation project to change the complexion of Erode market from 'unorganized' to a world-class market. It is found that the major stakeholders like Textile owners, and textile buyers in three different markets of erode have few problems in using this services. The success of any public private partnership projects is determined in the way it is used. So understanding the views of Textile owners and textile buyers will determine the success of the project any projects relevant for their growth and development.

About Texvalley

Texvalley is situated at Gangapuram, Erode, Tamil Nadu. With 16 Lakh Sq.Ft. in 18 Acres, of fully integrated textile market, with 6 Floors, which sprawls with all kind of fabrics to fulfil the needs of textile owners and textile buyers. It has 10 Product Zones, Uses unique dual zoning methodology with 1599 Shops. The total project cost was estimated to be around Rs. 145 crores. Texvalley is being promoted by Erode Textile Mall Ltd., a Special Purpose Vehicle established under the Comprehensive Power loom Cluster Development Scheme of the Ministry of Textiles, Govt. of India and supported by the Govt. of Tamil Nadu. This textile mall is considered to be the India's Largest wholesale textile market located in Erode, the heart of South India's textile industry. It showcases the wholesale and retail textile business to buyers from across the world. The vision of this integrated textile market was to transform the region into a thriving textile hub by doing business with a whole new perspective. The market follows the philosophy of spotlighting Erode as the destination of choice for textile trading, Revolutionizing business practices in the region by leveraging inherent resources, Unparalleled commitment and maximum value to shareholders and tenants value, and Enriching people's lives by providing modern and distinctive environments.

Problem statement

The integrated marketing facility was proposed and started with the objective of providing adequate opportunities for the textile owners and textile buyers to function and use the services more efficiently. And the primary focus was to benefit the small and medium textile manufacturers and traders, as it would bring in all the weekly markets in Erode under a single roof. Mainly they aim at offering a platform for textile owners who are presently doing their business in the weekly shandies in three locations in the city namely the Gani market, central theatre market and Ashokapuram market. Even with world class facility and many positive factors it was found the occupancy in Texvalley is comparatively low. The major occupant's for Texvalley is situated in all the above mentioned 3 markets. Hence, researcher in the proposed study focused to understand the following in order to analyse the following factors for further empirical investigation of the study focus.

Objectives of the Study

1. To understand the Nature of the operations involved in day to day operations of textile owners residing at Gani market
2. To understand the nature and demographic profile of buyers visiting Gani Market
3. To measure the merchant's satisfaction with respect to services rendered by Gani market
4. To understand the Marketing strategies practiced by Textile owners at Gani Market
5. To explore Textile merchant's awareness and their perception towards Textile wholesale market at Erode and other nearby markets Ashokapuram, central, Texvalley
6. To list the barriers which prevent the merchants in availing the services rendered by Texvalley

II. Methodology

Methodology

To understand the perceived similarities and differences of each market it was decided to collect data through Focus group discussion. A Focus Group Discussion (or FGD) is a qualitative research method in the social sciences, with a particular emphasis and application in the developmental program evaluation sphere. FGDs are a predetermined semi-structured interview led by a skilled moderator. The moderator asks broad questions to elicit responses and generate discussion among the participants. The moderator's goal is to generate the maximum amount of discussion and opinions within a given time period. The essential purpose of FGD is to identify a range of perspectives of the research topic and gain understanding of the issue from perspectives of participants themselves. Also it helps to highlight the issues prominent to the participants. A comfortable Non-threatening environment must be provided where they can express their views freely. 10 textile owners doing business at Gani market have participated in the FGD. Discussion with the participants has been facilitated through well-defined objectives and questions. Various thought provoking situations have been conducted to understand the stakeholder's opinion. Detailed moderator guidelines are attached in

Appendix 1 Image No: 1 & 2 The participants, moderator and observer of the FGD



(Image No: 1)



(Image No: 2)

III. Result

Profile of the respondents

- All participants are males and all are textile owners doing business at Gani Market
- The average experience of the participant in the field of textile business is 12 years
- Out of 10, 6 participants have permanent shops at Gani Market, they will involve in business on all 7 days.
- The remaining members have temporary shops, involve in doing business on the selective days in each week
- Age group range between 35 yrs. – 55yrs.

Findings and discussion

The FGD was conducted for 3 hours and the responses was recorded with permission of the respondents. The moderator guidelines were followed to probe the thought process of the respondents. The recorded responses were categorized based and objectives of the study and tabulated below.

Table No:1 The FGD objectives and key findings

<p>Objective -1 To understand the nature of the operations involved in day to day operations of textile owners residing at Gani market</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying, selecting and procuring the material from other vendors, is one of the major task executed by textile owners. • Most of the merchants are involved in selling the products at different market. • Monday and Tuesday is filled with wholesale buyers at Gani market while, other days for the retail buyers. • Many merchants do business at Gani market on Monday and Tuesday, they go to other nearby markets on other days like Saturday and Sunday at Coimbatore markets., & so on. • They pay great attention in customer relation and quality of the products they sell. The customers are regular customer they will come back next week and question the seller. Hence they are very conscious on quality and promises they make to customers • The selling process involves commendable amount of negotiation • On an average there will be 200-300 footfalls every day in the market. • Apart from selling activity, few merchants also involved in production of the products sold by them in the market.
<p>Objective 2: To understand the nature and demographic profile of buyers visiting Gani Market</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 95% of the customers visiting Gani Market are very small retailers doing business at their home town. • Most of the customers visiting Gani market are basically doing business at the areas located nearby Erode district serving the local customers. • On Tuesday the other state customers from Andhra Pradesh Karnataka, Kerala and other northern parts of the country visits the market. • The other region customers are from Coimbatore, Namakal, Madurai, Gobichettipalayam, Nambiyur, Hosur, Krishnagiri, Tiruvanamalai, Sathyamangalam and also from nearby villages. • Customers from Gobichettipalayam, Nambiyur, Hosur, Krishnagiri, Tiruvanamalai, Sathyamangalam and northern part of the country visits the market in night time and all others will visit in morning hours. • They also revealed that there are new set of women customers getting into the textile business who buy in smaller volumes they are the house wife's, the ladies who do tailoring, and women in Self-Help Group women's (SHG). • Small farmers in this area who does not know other jobs have also turned up to do smaller business in textiles by buying in smaller amounts every week and selling on some particular locations in their village markets.
<p>Objective 3: To measure the merchant's</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Temporary and permanent shops. They agree that the rent charged at Gani market is very cheap and nominal compare to other shops. No advance is required to occupy a space at Gani market

<p>satisfaction with respect to services rendered by Gani market</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They are also happy with the safety and security aspects available at Gani Market • However, they have expressed concern over basic infrastructure facilities and availability of space for the business expansion. As already around 800 merchants occupied the place at Gani market, they believe that it would be very difficult for any new merchant to get a space at Gani market.
<p>Objective 4 To understand the Marketing strategies practiced by Textile owners at Gani Market</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gani Market service providers don't practice any marketing strategies to attract the customer footfall • As a result, the textile owners have not realized any significant increase among the customer walk ins. • The walk-ins are causal walk ins who comes there because of the natural convenience like it is in center of city, good transport facility, ensured safety because of the place it is located. Accessibility to other things basic things like hotels, ATMs etc., • However, the sellers practice few selling strategies. In order to attract the customers entering Gani market few sellers try to differentiate their service by providing unique goods at the reasonable price with good customer relationship. • However, it is observed, same products are sold by most of the merchants and it is a perfect market conditions.
<p>Objective 5 To explore Textile merchant's awareness and their perception towards Textile wholesale market at erode and other nearby markets ashokapuram, central, text valley</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All merchants are aware about the other markets available at nearby places specifically ashokapuram, central and texvalley. But awareness is comparatively less on aspects like facilities, ease of operations and other marketing inputs offered. • Few of them do operate in other markets also. • They strongly believe as Gani Market is located near to the central bus stop, it is easy for the buyers to access the market through Bus and Railways • The existing customer walk-ins at Gani is comparatively better than other markets
<p>Objective 6 To list the barriers which prevents the merchants in availing the services rendered by Texvalley</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a general comment among the participants at texvalley the rental charges are very high which is very difficult for the textile owners to pay • Huge amount is charged at texvalley in the form of advance. And the possibility to get the advance back at the end of the contract is also less • Though the presence of modern facilities at Texvalley is good, it fails to attract more audience / buyers • The Number of wholesale merchant available at Gani market is very high. Buyers in general perceive Gani market as one place to purchase all the materials. So it is quiet common at Gani, that the merchants get business through other merchants sells different stuffs. No such opportunity exists at Texvalley as the number of wholesale merchant and the customer walk-in is very less • As the texvalley is located little interior, accessibility is still more difficult

IV. Discussion

It was found that the business owners are satisfied with the market they operate. They believe even a new person who start this business in Gani market can succeed due to its legacy and its name. They feel it is a mother market for all the new markets. The values and learning from this market has to be taken to design the marketing strategy for texvalley. The textile owners are satisfied with the services but not highly satisfied their responses is ranged between average satisfaction to satisfaction. Hence, it's a right time to address the problems of increasing footfalls in the Txvalley market. The pricing factors should be a prime factor for differentiating from other markets. Hence, a discounted or a different pricing strategies should be adopted. The infrastructural needs like transportation, safety and security should be planned very aggressively which will ensure the buyers to the market.

V. Conclusion

This study methodology and study objectives help to understand the various facets of textile market operations and its stakeholder's perspectives. The study findings will help to frame the factors for quantitative study and further the items which can measure the various factors. Also, multiple FGDs with different homogenous group in the same market can help to understand the problem much deeper thereby the problems can be classified as macro and micro in each markets. Educating the textile owners to think bigger and expand their business by moving to integrated textile mall is operationally possible by addressing their problems identified.

References

- [1]. Aziz, N. A. (2015). Role of Focus Group Discussion (FGD) in e-Business Research. *OALib*, 02(01), 1–6. <https://doi.org/10.4236/oalib.1101281>
- [2]. Boateng, W. (2012). Evaluating the Efficacy of Focus Group Discussion (FGD) in Qualitative Social Research. *International Journal of Business and Social Science*, 3(7), 54–57.
- [3]. Com, M. (2017). "A Study On Problems Faced By Power Loom Industries In Somanur Region Of Coimbatore District," 6(5), 42–46.
- [4]. Dawson, A., Daniels, J., & Clapham, K. (2014). The contribution of focus group discussions to Aboriginal Australian health service research: A content analysis of practice and experience. *International Journal of Critical Indigenous Studies*, 7(2), 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13398-014-0173-7.2>

- [5]. Eeuwijk, P. Van, & Zuzana, A. (2017). How to Conduct a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) Methodological Manual By Peter van Eeuwijk and Zuzanna Angehrn.
- [6]. FGO2. (2016). Focus group discussion 1, (May), 1–10.
- [7]. Freitas, H., Oliveira, M., Jenkins, M., & Popjoy, O. (1998). The Focus Group, A Qualitative Research Method. *Isrsc*, (010298), 1–22. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.watres.2013.02.032>
- [8]. Mishra, L. (2016). Focus Group Discussion in Qualitative Research. *TechnoLearn: An International Journal of Educational Technology*, 6(1), 1. <https://doi.org/10.5958/2249-5223.2016.00001.2>
- [9]. Manivannan, L., Saravanaraj, M. G., Gopan, R., & Manivannan, C. (2007). Strategic Approach to Power Loom Business : An Empirical Evaluation, 45–54.
- [10]. Rabiee, F. (2004). Focus-group interview and data analysis. *Proceedings of the Nutrition Society*, 63(04), 655–660. <https://doi.org/10.1079/PNS2004399>
- [11]. Reed, J., & Roskell Payton, V. (1997). Focus Groups: Issues of analysis and interpretation. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 26, 765–771.
- [12]. Smithson, J. (2000). Using and analysing focus groups: Limitations and possibilities. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 3(2), 103–119. <https://doi.org/10.1080/136455700405172>
- [13]. Interactive Session on ‘ Focus Group Discussion ’ for Health Professionals in India : A Mixed-Methods Evaluation. (2015), 9(2), 38–42.

Appendix 1 Moderator Guidelines

The moderator guidelines is prepared before the FGD and it will be used by the moderator for conducting the FGD

Key Objectives

- To understand the Nature of the operations involved in day to day operations of textile owners residing at Texvalley
- To understand the nature and demographic profile of buyers visiting Gani Market
- To measure the merchant’s satisfaction with respect to services rendered by Gani market
- To understand the Marketing strategies practiced by Textile owners at Gani Market
- To explore Textile merchant’s awareness and their perception towards Textile wholesale market at erode and other nearby markets ashokapuram, central, texvalley
- To list the barriers which prevents the merchants in availing the services rendered by other markets

Target Audience

1. Textile owners doing business at Gani Market
2. Age group range between 35 - 55
3. All participants are Males
4. Total number of participants is 8

Key Instructions to The Moderator

- Two hours is allotted per focus group and 7 – 8 participants will participate in this focus group discussion
- Keep the research objectives in mind and ensure that we have answers to the same at the end of the discussion
- The role of the moderator is to facilitate the discussion not lead it.
- Use your judgment to determine if the topic is providing valuable data and need to adjust the amount of time spent on that particular topic.
- Encourage each participant to speak equally. Call on participants that are not contributing as much to the discussion.
- Ensure that the focus group discussion completes within 120 Minutes.
- Suggest to participants to speak up when they have difference of opinion, rather than agreeing with everyone else’s opinions and values.
- Provide paper and pen to participants for recapitulating some information and for additional notes they may want to take throughout the focus group.
- Ensure that all the questions are covered by the end of the discussion. If at any point, you feel that any of the projective techniques are not working, please flag off to the concerned researcher

Broad Discussion Flow

Context Setting & Introduction Of Moderator	Making Respondents Feel Comfortable With The Entire Set-Up – Warm Up And Round Of Introduction (5 Mins)
Section I: Understanding The Context Of Participants; Their Introduction	Respondents Introduction, Family Details, (15 Mins)
Section II: Understanding The Nature Of The Business Operations Involved	Describing The Type Of The Tasks Involved In Day To Day Activities , Identifying Vendor And Seller, Procurement Of Final

In Buying And Selling Textile Garments	Goods, (30 Mins)
Section Iii: Understandign The Marketing Practices ,Difficulties And Challenges Faced In Executing The ,Business Operations, Opinion In Expanding The Busienss	Type Of Marketing Strategies Practiced To Get The Buyers , Challenges Faced In Getting New Prospects [National And International Clients](30 Mins)
Section Iv: Measuring The Merchant Expectations And Satisfaction With Respect To Gani Market	Customer Satisfactio With Respect To Seviles Rendered By Gani Market [Transporatation, Ware House Facility, Atm , Bank , Meeting Halls Etc (20mints)
Section V: Perception On Availing The Services Rendered At Other Textile Market	Awareness And Willingness In Availing Services Rendered By Nearby Markets [Ashokapuram, Tex Valley And Central (20mints)

SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION AND WARM UP

INTRODUCTION TO MARKET RESEARCH [5 Mints]

- Thank respondent for participating
- Introduce self
- Significance of Qualitative study in executing Market Research
- Explain purpose of recording (Audio) and Confidentiality of information
- Urge respondents to share their free and frank opinion about everything

SECTION I: INTRODUCTION OF RESPONDENTS (TO BE ASKED INDIVIDUALLY) [15 Mints]

- Thank the respondents for taking part in the activity again. Request them to introduce themselves
- Tell me something about yourself
- Tell me your name and what do you do & your occupation?
- How many years you are involved in this business?
- How many members are there in your family? What are they doing?
- Where is your home?

SECTION II : NATURE OF BUSINESS OPERATIONS [DAY TO DAY ACTIVITY] [30 Mints]



(Moderator needs to ensure to get answer for the all the questions given below (from every participant)

1. Can you describe on how do you perceive the above situation?
2. Can you comment on your day to day business activities? (Business operations)
3. How do you identify your vendors and customers?
4. Can you describe the demographic profile of the customers visiting Gani market [place, age, gender, economic status etc]

SECTION III: Marketing Practices [30 mints]

Dr Raj, salaried person earns more than a lakh per month resides at Erode wants to resign his job and interested to do a similar business like you

1. What are the challenges he may likely face in this field?
2. Will you advise him to continue with his job? or will you suggest him to do his business
3. Can you offer few marketing strategies to identify and convert the business leads in to customers?
4. How many customers walks in to Gani market per day?

5. Do you have any idea to go far business expansion?
6. Can you offer few suggestions to increase the customer footfall to textile whole sale market?

SECTION IV: Merchant's Satisfaction over service attributes @ Gani Market and Other Local Market [20 mint]

(Moderator needs to ensure to get answer for the all the questions given below (from every participant))

1. Write down top five service facilities that you expect in any whole sale market
2. Write down top five service facilities that your client required in a wholesale market?
3. Which textile market in erode has all such facilities which you have discussed above

SECTION V : PERCEPTION ON AVAILING THE SERVICES RENDERED AT OTHER TEXTILE MARKET [20 Mints]

Moderator need to inform the participants on the following activity

[20 Mints can be spent on the below given questions]

1. Do you have any plans to expand your business?
2. Have you visited other nearby markets?
3. What are the other textile whole sale market incase if you decide to go for a business expansion? Why?

THANK THE RESPONDENT

Nalini Palaniswamy, "Focus Group Discussion (FGD) on the Business Challenges and operational issues of Textile Owners in Textile Market A Qualitative Study." IOSR Journal of Business and Management (IOSR-JBM) 20.9 (2018): 38-44.