

Original research Article

Export marketing strategies of cashew exporters in Kerala

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ABSTRACT

Aims: India is the world's largest cashew producer, processor, and consumer. For years, India had an unrivalled and unchallenged monopoly on cashew production, processing, and marketing around the world. Considering the promising future of the cashew export market, the study aimed to identify the export marketing strategies of cashew exporters in Kerala.

Place and Duration of the Study: 68 cashew exporters (who have been continuously exporting the cashew for the last five years) in Kollam district of Kerala were selected randomly and the primary survey was conducted through a pre –tested structured questionnaire.

Methods: To find out the marketing strategies which used by the cashew exporters, descriptive percent is used. The descriptive technique provides the total or whole and is therefore calculated by dividing the total or whole number by 100. The advantage of this technique is that the strategies are arranged based on their severity from the point of view of respondents.

Results: The study highlighted that the surveyed cashew exporters were following CEPCI nomenclature for cashew export strategies with regards to product, packaging, price, payment, promotion, and distribution. The export product strategies mainly followed by the exporters such as offering certified cashew, adopting both premium and competitive pricing, exporting through shipping mode and ensuring timely delivery, giving samples to new customers for experiencing taste, attending trade fairs organised by CEPCI (Kaju India) and BSM (Business Sellers Meet), publish advertisements in the CEPCI Directory; visitors to the exporting company, sending brochures, photographs and price lists by postal / online mode to their clients.

Conclusion: Certain strategies are not currently followed by the exporters such as wooden box packaging, letter of credit, attracting tourists to purchase cashew from Kerala, maintaining good relation with multinational companies and appointing PRO for translating languages to customers. In addition to that contribute in a better way to the growth of the country by providing gainful employment opportunities via attaining women empowerment fetching foreign exchange to the nation and protecting it as a dominant position in the international market that it used to enjoy till a decade back.

Key Words: Cashew, exporters, Percent analysis, export marketing strategies

INTRODUCTION

India is the world's largest cashew producer, processor, and consumer. For years, India had an unrivalled and unchallenged monopoly on cashew production, processing, and marketing around the world. However, when more and more producing countries acquired processing know-how and entered the international market, India's premium position began to erode, and her share of the international market began to decline from 65 percent 25 years ago to 29 percent now [1]. Domestic consumption, on the other hand, had risen to such heights that she is now the world's largest consumer. However, she earned



this position at the expense of her international market share. But this position she achieved was at the cost of her lowering the share in the international market. But, in order to obtain this position, she had to reduce her market share in the foreign market [2].

India was dragged into the race by its reliance on imported raw materials, underutilised processing capacity, high processing costs, and a lack of mechanisation, modernization, and innovation. Another issue confronting the processing industry is a lack of people [3]. Traditional processing methods require seven to nine man- days to process an 80 kg bag of cashews [4]. As a result, she has among of the highest processing expenses in the world. In addition, India's domestic market would face competition from other countries as other processing countries looked to tap into the growing domestic market [5]. Raw nut production in India is already hampered by competition from other crops such as rubber, spices, and so on [6]. Other cash crops provide farmers with higher profits. Another factor contributing to India's poor raw nut output growth rate is the ageing of trees and low productivity [7]. Another issue to deal with would be the ever-increasing home consumption and tremendous demand for kernels on the worldwide market [8].

The export marketing strategy is how a firm responds to the interaction of internal and external pressures to accomplish the export venture's goal. It encompasses all aspects of a marketing strategy, such as product, promotion, pricing, and distribution. The activity of selling items or services to a foreign country is known as export marketing. Products are manufactured or distributed in the company's home country and sold to buyers in other countries. However, there is a distinction to be made between the marketing strategies for domestic buyers and especially targeted toward overseas buyers. This is where the relevance of the export marketing strategy for overseas buyers comes into play. The major marketing strategies can be divided into four categories: Product, Price, place and promotion. During this session, the researcher discovered the export marketing strategies of cashew exporters in Kerala.

METHODOLOGY

For research, 68 cashew exporters were selected from (who have been continuously exporting the cashew for the last five years) Kollam district in Kerala. The respondents were selected through a random sampling technique. Preliminary information were collected from the exporters using pre-tested questionnaires to better understand and design the current and future export marketing strategies of the (Indian) cashew exporters in Kerala. The schedule is mainly designed to address the current and future cashew export marketing strategies in Kerala from four marketing mix dimensions (export product strategies, export pricing strategies, export place strategies and export promotion strategies). To figure out the types of export marketing strategies descriptive frequency of percent analysis was employed. They are being done, done but not now and planning in future was used. The results are presented under the following six consecutive sub heads.

Application of the descriptive frequency of percent analysis

One of the most frequent ways to represent statistics is by percent. Percent simply means "per hundred" and the symbol used to express percent is %. One percent (or 1%) is one-hundredth of the total or whole and is therefore calculated by dividing the total or whole number by 100. In the study, the frequency and percent analysis were employed to figure out the type of export marketing strategies that are currently being implemented, those that are being planned to be implemented in the future and strategies which were implemented before but not presently applicable to cashew export firms in Kerala.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS

Export product strategy

Cashew is an agricultural product and the quality of the final product, i.e. the cashew kernel, its quality, may vary from origin to origin and the methods of processing. The selection of the right raw material from the right source, the techniques adopted in processing and the adherence to quality standards, all ensure the right quality of the end product. The general specifications of cashew kernels and the tolerance levels are mostly specified by Cashew Export Promotion Council of India (CEPCI), Kerala and Association of Food Industries (AFI), USA. Still, within the tolerance limits fixed by the above, the quality of cashew kernels varies and also the acceptance. The general quality of cashew kernel exported from a country will brand the product of the country, marking the level of acceptance/ preference of the produce of the country. For the purpose of analysing the export marketing strategies of cashew exporters, the major export product strategies were listed out and exporters were asked to list out the strategies followed by them. The product strategies followed by the exporters are as follows.

Offering certified cashew

The exporters in Kerala, exported cashew with certifications like International Organisation for Standardization (ISO), Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) and British Retail Consortium (BRC). The certified cashew nuts are allowed for international trade.



Offering cashew in specified grades

Wholes, Scorched Pieces, Butts, Splits and dessert pieces are the specific grades in cashew, among these grades of cashew; it is exported as per the requirement of the buyer.

Offering premium cashew

W180, W210, W240, W320, W450 are the premium cashews. Colour is the first catching parameter for the product. The inherent colour of the cashew kernel is slight ivory to grey, which can be preserving as such in good processing. This would result in a golden hue after roasting, which is much accepted in the market. Also the removal of skin using knife and damaging the outer coating of the kernel will result in patch marks after roasting.

Offering crispier cashew

Crispiness which is indicated that less moisture content in cashew. According to the CEPCI and AFI norms the acceptable level of moisture content in plain cashew is seven percent.

Following CEPCI nomenclature with respect to infestation level

Infestation in cashew kernels leads to rejection of the kernels by the health authorities of the importing countries. Processing of cashew under the un-hygienic conditions, long exposure of cashew kernels and improper packing, lead to getting infestated.

Ensuring minimum broken percent as per the norms of CEPCI

The cashew kernels subjected to breakage during handling and transit and also the lesser levels of moisture results in large breakage. The acceptable level of broken kernels is maximum five percent of the total weight.

Maintaining the odour of cashew

Cashew turns sustainable to rancidity if not properly preserved. More levels of moisture, long storage and improper packing all leads to rancidity in the cashew kernels that results in unacceptable odour.

Offering high quality cashew better than other cashew exporter countries

The taste and quality of cashew kernels depends more or less on the method and technique of processing. Kerala normally uses the drum roasting method, which is an oil expulsion process and as such the presence of Cashew Nut Shell liquid (CNSL) is almost nil in Indian cashew. Other exporter countries (competitors) use different types of processing that retain a portion of the CNS liquid in the kernels. As such the cashew kernels may not be that sweet as that of drum roasted. Taste and quality of the cashew kernel is an important parameter in its acceptance in the international market, especially when used as a snack/confectionary items.

Supply of sufficient capacity demanded by importing countries

Exporters always meet the requirement of the buyers as per their CEPCI/ AFI specification (infestation level, breakage percent etc.).

From the survey it was found that all the above mentioned strategies are presently done by all the respondents irrespective of its category. No specific strategies have been designed for future by any of the exporting firms.

Export packaging strategy

The CBI's packaging manual defines packaging as the "means of providing protection, containment, presentation, identification, information and convenience" to the product or commodity packed. It further states that packaging has to be "for the full life of a product during storage, transport, display and use". Cashew consuming markets are located far away from the producing or processing countries. The climatic and the temperature differences, the humidity conditions are too wide to be ignored. The packaging should be able to withstand these stresses and be able to protect this high value product from the vagaries of vastly divergent climatic conditions. Cashew is a high value commodity and needs extra care in packaging. Packaging does play an important role in cashew exports. Presence of oxygen and moisture accelerates infestation. The moisture level is a critically important factor. As such, the packaging material chosen should have good barrier properties against oxygen and moisture [9].

The respondents were asked to express their opinions towards the export packaging strategies of cashew exporters. The whole respondents confirmed that the variables given to assess the export packaging strategies of cashew exporters were found as strategies that are already in place. The packaging strategies followed by the exporters are as follows.



Flexi bag packaging

The flexi packs being flexible, cartons plays an important in the total packaging. The paper quality, floating direction, compression strength, type of adhesive all are important factors that affect the quality of flexi bag packaging. Today 750 cartons 50 lbs can be loaded into a 20-ft container. Vaccumisation and gas flushing will do in the packaging process to avoid infestation. Vaccumised using electric pumps, filled with CO_2 gas. CO_2 and nitrogen will prevent infestation and clumping. The higher the moisture and CO_2 , there is a chance of clumping; and higher the presence of oxygen and moisture content, higher the chance for infestation. Hence the vacuum level, oxygen and moisture levels are very crucial in flexi bag packaging [9].

Tin pouch packaging

Tin packaging was developed more than half a-century ago and has under gone only minor modifications. During that period, in the cashew buying countries, there have been colossal changes in their socio-economic conditions; industrial growth and wage rates; income expenditure patterns; health, safety and environmental awareness levels and the like. The most important one is that it is rodent proof. Since the tin container is rigid the product inside is saved from the impact of various external stresses during transit. The rigid tin walls provide extra stacking strength to the cartons. The conventional and extensively used packing system is the four gallon tin system, where one tin with a net weight of 11.34 kg (25 Lbs). Two such tins of the same grade are packed in a carton for export. The net weight of each carton is thus 22.68 kg (50 Lbs). Some exporters also pack in tins 10 kg net to suit the requirements of buyers. The filled tins are vaccumised and filled with carbon – di- oxide gas and sealed [9].

Wooden packaging

A wooden box is a container made of wood for storage or as a shipping container. Wooden boxes have been used from several years for storage needs. It is the best way to give protection for the products that are being stored as these boxes can't easily be broken. These packaging is renewable. Resource – friendly raw material that behaves completely CO_2 neutrally in the value added chain and can be easily disposed of [9]. The wooden packing contains can easily become contaminated with fungi and bacteria and it requires lot of human labour and time to unpack, which makes unpacking expensive.

To figure out the export packaging strategies which are being done, done but not now, planning in future, are analysed in the below Table.

	Frequency (N = 68)			
Packaging strategies	Being done (%)	Done but not now (%)	Planning in future (%)	
Following flexi bag packaging	100	0	0	
Following tin pouch packaging	100	0	0	
Following wooden box packaging	0	100	0	

Table 1.Export packaging strategies of cashew exporters

(Source: Compiled from primary data)

With respect to export packaging strategies, 100 percent of the respondents followed flexi bag and tin pouch packaging. Types of packaging are decided by the importing countries. Many of the cashew kernel buyers from Dubai, Saudi Arabia and South Korea advise the cashew kernel exporters in Kerala to opt for tin pouch packaging because these countries are not allowing plastic materials into their country. The cashew Kernel buyers in USA, Europe and Japan have been advising the cashew kernel exporters in Kerala to opt for flexible packaging. None of the respondents are following the wooden packaging method; because it is not convenient to transit. Currently, competitors such as Brazil and Vietnam are required to use cashew that are packed in eco- friendly packing materials and are packed in hygienic conditions based on the culture and taste of the consumers.

Export pricing Strategy

Cashew kernels are priced at \$ per lb in the international trade. Cashew traders and buyers often look at the difference between the grades, as these can make an impact on purchasing decisions. Trends and dynamics of cashew trade and prices of both the in- shell cashew and cashew kernels are responding primarily to the tightness of the supply - demand balance influenced by unpredictable factors such as weather, economic and social crisis and small farmers' behaviour. This renders the market highly speculative, with long term price evolution hard to predict and short term prices volatility.

Respondents were asked to indicate the export pricing strategies followed by them. All the respondents affirmed that they are following premium pricing strategy and competitive pricing method as the major pricing strategies of cashew exporters. The pricing strategies followed by the exporters are as follows.



Competitive pricing method

Competitive pricing is the process of selecting strategic price points to take best advantage of a product or service based market relative to competition. This pricing method is used more often by businesses selling similar products since services can vary from business to business, while the attributes of a product remain similar.

Premium pricing method

Premium pricing is a strategy that involves tactically pricing your company's product higher than your immediate competition. The purpose of pricing your product at a premium is to cultivate a sense in the market of your product being just that bit higher in quality than the rest.

From the survey, it was found that 100 percent of respondents follow both the premium pricing and competitive pricing methods. The price of in shell cashew is directly related to cashew kernel price, is based on kernel quality and efficiency. The price of cashews, based on different grades, is determined by the New York market internationally and domestically at CEPCI. Fluctuations in cashew prices weaken the confidence of buyers in the market and hamper their commitment to buy forward. Banks, traders and entrepreneurs are reluctant to invest in domestic cashew processing due to the volatility of prices. None of the exporters exported cashew nuts for credit. There are large numbers of buyers to purchase cashew for spot payment.

Export payment Strategy

To succeed in today's global marketplace and win sales against foreign competitors, exporters must offer their customers attractive sales terms supported by the appropriate payment methods. Because getting paid in full and on time is the ultimate goal for each export sale, an appropriate payment method must be chosen carefully to minimize the payment risk while also accommodating the needs of the buyer. There are three primary methods used for the payment for international transactions of cashew. They are Cash against Documents (CAD), Telegraphic Transfer (TT) and Letter of Credit (LC). During or before contract negotiations, both the parties of this trade selected the method in mutually. For exporters, sale is a gift until payment is received [10]. Therefore, exporters want to receive payment as soon as possible, preferable as soon as an order is placed or before the goods are sent to the importer.

The respondents were asked to express their opinions towards the export payment strategies of cashew exporters. The whole respondents confirmed that all the variables given to assess the export payment strategies of cashew exporters were found as strategies which are already in place. The payment strategies followed by the exporters are as follows.

Cash Against Document (CAD)

The cash against documents is a payment tool or method used in international transactions between a seller and buyer. It is a process where an importer pays for the ordered goods before they are received.

Telegraphic Transfer (TT)

Telegraphic Transfer is primarily employed for overseas wire transactions. It may take two to four days to transfer the money, depending on the destination of the transfer. TT is more secure and safe mode of transfer, the chances of getting affected by exchange rate fluctuations are very less.

Letter of Credit (LC)

A Letter of Credit (LC) is a document that guarantees the buyer's payment to the sellers. It is issued by a bank and ensures timely and full payment to the seller. If the buyer is unable to make such a payment, the bank covers the full or the remaining amount on behalf of the buyer. A letter of credit is issued against a pledge of securities or cash [11]. To figure out the export payment strategies which are being done, done but not now, planning in future, are analysed in the below Table.

		58)	
Payment strategies	Being done (%)	Done but not now (%)	Planning in future (V)
Cash against Documents (CAD)	100	0	0
Telegraphic Transfer (TT)	100	0	0
Letter of Credit (LC)	0	100	0

(Source: Compiled from primary data)



The all (100%) respondents currently implemented by both Cash against Document (CAD) and Telegraphic Transfer (TT) as export payment strategy. These payment methods are transferring fund through electronically. Most countries in the USA, UK, Dubai, South Korea and Europe have opted for the Cash against Document (CAD) method whereas Japan, Saudi Arabia and Hong Kong have opted for Telegraphic Transfer (TT). 100 percent of exporters do not follow the payment method, Letter of Credit as export payment strategy. This is because the risk of fraud in Letter of Credit is very high compared to other payment methods.

Export distribution strategy

Exports can open up new opportunities, fuel growth and dramatically boost the takings and profits. Selling cashew and service abroad can massively increase the customer base and company profits. A good distribution strategy will identify the best selling channels of the cashew exporting company and how to exploit them. In all countries, distribution represents a large share of domestic economic activity and employment. But successful exporting relies on understanding where good sales opportunities lie and how best to take advantage of them.

The exporters were asked to express their opinion on different export distribution strategies of Indian cashew exporters. The distribution strategies followed by the exporters are as follows.

Reaching customers via their contact mail/ WhatsApp

In this digital world the buyers and sellers can contact them through Email, WhatsApp or any other social media platforms.

Shipping mode

The exporters were used shipping mode for cashew export to the different parts of the world. It carries bulk quantity and cheaper cost compared to other transportation modes.

Timely delivery

At the time of signing the consignment, the delivery time also mentioned. Timely delivery is a good distribution strategy for the exporters; it leads to increases the export business.

Products are distributed as per the packaging norms of importing countries

Two packaging norms are mainly followed by the exporters for cashew export. They are flexi bag packaging and tin pouch packaging. The packaging model are opted by the buyers at the time of consignment. Dubai, Saudi Arabia and South Korea opted the tin pouch packaging whereas USA, Europe and Japan were preferred flexible packaging.

From the survey it was found that all the above mentioned distribution strategies are presently done by all the respondents irrespective of its category. No specific strategies have been designed for future by any of the exporting firms.

Export promotion strategy

Export promotion is sometimes seen as a complementary development strategy to import protection. While import protection usually allows infant industry to develop, export promotion allows access to external markets [12]. Foreign demand is often required by the limited size of domestic markets and the need to achieve economies of scale, essential in many productive activities. Subsidies, trade fairs, advertisements and special credit lines are the main tools for promoting exports. List of the export promotion strategy used by cashew exporters are explained as follows.

Offering cashew for new customers for use as a trial

Exporters were sent to the required quantity to the new buyer of cashew kernel and given a free trail.

Participating the trade fairs conducted by CEPCI (Kaju India)

The selected respondents are members of CEPCI, and hence everyone is participated in the trade fair like 'Kaju India' organised by CEPCI. Exporters get a chance to represent their company and taking initiative to arrange extra ordinary events to promote Indian cashew at the international market.

Participating in BSM (Business sellers Meet)

Participating in Business Sellers Meet (BSM) conducted by the different countries around the world like gulf food, Japan foodex, Riga food, INC, Korean promotion etc.

Publish advertisements in CEPCI directory

Exporters publish their company advertisements in CEPCI directory and on the CEPCI website. It gives all the information related to the particular company like the registration date of the company, different grades of cashew nuts and the picture of their factory.



Buyers visit in exporters company

As per the buyer's request, exporters were allowed the buyers to visit their company before the consignment. They visit the premises and take pictures of their work, if they liked the experience in cashew industry; they would sign the contract.

Attracting tourists to purchase cashew from Kerala

Tourists play an important part in promoting cashew in Kerala because of their visits.

Maintaining a good relation with multi-national companies

Exporters had good relation with multi- national companies such as Toyota, Sony Food Company, Reliance etc.

Sending brochures, photographs, price lists via mail / online mode

Exporters were sending brochures, photographs, and price lists via, online mode as per the requirement of the buyer.

Appointing a PRO who knows foreign languages during the trade show, to translate for customers

Exporters hired a Public Relation Officer (PRO) for translating the languages during the trade shows earlier.

To figure out the export payment strategies which are being done, done but not now, planning in future, are analysed in the below Table.

	Frequency (N = 68)			
Promotion strategies	Being done (Percent)	Done but not now (Percent)	Planning in future (Percent)	
ing cashew for new customers for use as a trial	100	0	0	
Participating the trade fairs conducted by CEPCI (Kaju India)	100	0	0	
articipating in BSM (Business sellers Meet)	100	0	0	
sh advertisements in CEPCI directory	100	0	0	
rs visit in exporters company	100	0	0	
tracting tourists to purchase cashew from Kerala	0	100	0	
taining a good relation with multi-national companies	0	100	0	
ng brochures, photographs, price lists via mail / online mode	100	0	0	
inting a PRO who knows foreign languages during the trade show, to translate for customers	0	100	0	

Table 3. Export promotion strategies of cashew exporters

(Source: Compiled from primary data)

The export promotion strategies of cashew exporters in Kerala are presented in Table 3. In respect of export promotional strategies, the all respondents (100%) currently implemented the strategies like that offering cashew for new customers for use as a trial, participating the trade fairs conducted by CEPCI (Kaju India), participating in BSM (Business sellers Meet), advertisements in CEPCI directory, buyers visit in exporters company, sending brochures, photographs, price lists via mail / online mode. These are the current export promotional strategies used by cashew exporters in Kerala.

The strategies like attracting tourists to purchase cashew from Kerala, maintaining a good relation with multi-national companies and hired a Public Relation Officer (PRO) for translating the languages during the trade shows were followed earlier; but not currently. Even though, tourists used to play an important part in promoting cashew in Kerala during the past years, now it doesn't shows any relevance as it is already demanded by all over the world. Exporters had a good relation with multi – national companies like Toyota, Sony Food Company, Reliance etc. but now they do not promote business with these companies; because they will take sixty to ninety days credit for the payment. English is now used as a common language around the world, and there is no need for a Public Relation Officer (PRO) /translator during this trade show.

CONCLUSION

Conclusively, the surveyed cashew exporters were following CEPCI nomenclature for cashew export strategies with regards to product, packaging, price, payment, promotion, and distribution. The export product strategies mainly followed by the exporters such as offering certified cashew, specified grades of cashew, premium cashew, crispier cashew, level of infestation, minimum broken percent of cashew, maintain odour and high quality cashew. All the exporters adopting premium and competitive pricing as a pricing strategies and also focusing on the distribution strategies like reaching



customers via their mail order / WhatsApp/ online modes, exporting through shipping mode and ensuring timely delivery. The promotion of the cashew is ensured by giving samples to new customers for experiencing taste, attending trade fairs organised by CEPCI (Kaju India) and BSM (Business Sellers Meet), publish advertisements in the CEPCI Directory; visitors to the exporting company, sending brochures, photographs and price lists by postal / online mode to their clients. Certain strategies are not currently followed by the exporters such as wooden box packaging, letter of credit, attracting tourists to purchase cashew from Kerala, maintaining good relation with multinational companies and appointing PRO for translating languages to customers. In addition to that contribute in a better way to the growth of the country by providing gainful employment opportunities via attaining women empowerment fetching foreign exchange to the nation and protecting it as a dominant position in the international market that it used to enjoy till a decade back.

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