

International Journal of Agriculture Extension and Social Development

Volume 9; SP-Issue 8; August 2026; Page No. 13-16

Received: 14-05-2026
Accepted: 18-06-2026

Indexed Journal
Peer Reviewed Journal

Assessment of sheep sellers' preferences for buyers and marketing channel selection in different markets in Tirupati district of Andhra Pradesh

¹D Indira, ²P Manoj, ³G Gangaraju and ⁴Z Naveen

¹Associate Professor, Department of LPM, College of Veterinary Science, Proddatur, Andhra Pradesh, India

²Research Scholar, Department of LPM, College of Veterinary Science, Tirupati, Andhra Pradesh, India

³Professor and University Head, Department of LPM, College of Veterinary Science, Tirupati, Andhra Pradesh, India

⁴Assistant Professor, Department of LPT, College of Veterinary Science, Tirupati, Andhra Pradesh, India

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33545/26180723.2026.v9.i8Sa.4008>

Corresponding Author: D Indira

Abstract

The present study was conducted to assess the preferences of sheep sellers for different buyers and to identify the major factors influencing the selection of marketing channels in selected sheep markets of Andhra Pradesh. Data were collected from sheep sellers in Tirupati market, Gudur market, and other small markets of villages using a structured interview schedule. The preferences of sellers for different marketing channels were analyzed using Garrett's ranking technique. The results revealed that butchers were the most preferred buyers with a Garrett score of 54.17, followed by local markets (49.17), consumers (42.50), other farmers (40.82), local traders (37.50), and middlemen (15.00). Correct pricing and ease of transactions were the major reasons for selling sheep to butchers, whereas the availability of multiple buyers influenced the preference for local markets. Remunerative prices were the major factors motivating sales to consumers and other farmers. Home collection was the predominant reason for choosing local traders, while easy and fast transactions influenced the use of middlemen. The findings indicated that sheep sellers preferred marketing channels that provided better price realization, transparent pricing, convenience, and greater access to buyers. Strengthening direct farmer-buyer linkages, improving livestock market infrastructure, providing timely market price information, promoting collective marketing, and developing digital livestock marketing platforms may improve marketing efficiency and enhance the profitability of sheep farming.

Keywords: Sheep marketing, marketing channels, sheep sellers, buyer preference, Garrett ranking, price realization, livestock markets

1. Introduction

Sheep farming is an important component of the rural economy and contributes significantly to the livelihood and income security of small and marginal farmers. Besides providing meat, wool, manure, and skins, sheep serve as a readily available source of cash during financial emergencies. However, the profitability of sheep farming depends not only on efficient production practices but also on an effective marketing system that enables farmers to obtain remunerative prices for their animals.

Sheep marketing in India is largely unorganized and involves different marketing channels, including local traders, middlemen, livestock markets, butchers, consumers, and other farmers. The choice of a particular marketing channel is influenced by several factors, such as price realization, ease and speed of transactions, availability of buyers, transportation facilities, home collection of animals, advance payments, bargaining opportunities, and access to market information. The involvement of multiple intermediaries may reduce the producer's share in the consumer price, whereas direct marketing channels can potentially improve price realization and strengthen the bargaining position of sheep farmers.

Understanding the preferences of sheep sellers for different

buyers and the reasons influencing their choice of marketing channels is essential for identifying constraints and improving the efficiency of sheep marketing systems. Such information can facilitate the development of suitable interventions to strengthen farmer-buyer linkages, improve market infrastructure, enhance access to price information, and promote transparent and remunerative marketing practices.

Therefore, the present study was undertaken to assess the preferences of sheep sellers for different buyers and marketing channels and to identify the major factors influencing their choice of particular marketing channels in different sheep markets of Andhra Pradesh.

2. Materials and Methods

Study Area

The study was conducted in three major sheep trading centres, namely Tirupati market, Gudur market and selected village-level small markets of Andhra Pradesh.

Sampling Procedure

A total of 120 sheep sellers and 120 sheep buyers were selected randomly, comprising 40 respondents from each market.

Data Collection

Primary data were collected through personal interviews using a pre-tested structured questionnaire. Information was gathered regarding preferred marketing channels and reasons for choosing specific channels.

Analytical Tools

Frequency and percentage analyses were used to summarize the data. Garrett Ranking Technique was employed to rank marketing channels and reasons influencing market preferences.

3. Results

The distribution of sheep sellers according to their preference for different buyers is presented in the table. Among the six marketing channels, butchers were the most preferred buyers, with a Garrett score of 54.17, and ranked first. This was followed by local markets (49.17), consumers (42.50), other farmers (40.82), local traders (37.50), and middlemen (15.00).

The major reason for selling sheep to butchers was correct pricing (44.62%), followed by easy and fast transactions (43.08%), remunerative prices (15.38%), home collection (13.85%), and advance payments (10.77%). This indicates that sellers preferred butchers mainly because of fair price realization and convenience in completing transactions.

In the case of local markets, the most important reason for preference was the availability of variable buyers (47.46%). Easy and fast transactions and remunerative prices were equally reported by 37.29 per cent of sellers, while correct pricing was reported by only 10.17 per cent. The presence of multiple buyers in local markets may provide sellers with greater opportunities to compare prices and select suitable buyers.

Among sellers preferring consumers, remunerative prices (66.67%) emerged as the most important reason, followed by least price negotiation (54.90%), easy and fast transactions (11.76%), and advance payments (3.92%). Direct sale to consumers may enable sheep farmers to obtain better prices by reducing the involvement of intermediaries. For other farmers, remunerative prices (57.14%) constituted the major reason for preference, followed by correct pricing (51.02%), least price negotiation (12.24%), and easy and fast transactions (4.08%). This suggests that transactions between farmers were primarily influenced by better price realization and fair pricing.

Although local traders ranked fifth among the preferred buyers, home collection (84.44%) was the most important reason for choosing this channel, followed by easy and fast transactions (51.11%), advance payments (11.11%), correct pricing (2.22%), and remunerative prices (2.22%). Home collection reduces transportation difficulties and transaction-related efforts for sheep farmers.

Middlemen were the least preferred marketing channel, with a Garrett score of 15.00. However, all sellers who marketed their sheep through middlemen reported easy and fast transactions (100%) as the reason for selecting this channel. Overall, the findings revealed that sheep sellers preferred butchers and local markets, primarily due to correct pricing, availability of multiple buyers, remunerative prices, and convenience of transactions. Direct marketing channels such as sales to butchers, consumers, and other farmers were

generally preferred over intermediary-based channels. The results emphasize the importance of strengthening direct farmer-buyer linkages, improving access to competitive markets, and enhancing market information systems to improve price realization and profitability of sheep farming.

4. Discussion

The findings of the present study revealed considerable variation in the preference of sheep sellers for different marketing channels (Lavania *et al.* 2021) ^[3]. Butchers emerged as the most preferred buyers, followed by local markets, consumers, other farmers, local traders, and middlemen. The higher preference for butchers could be attributed to the assurance of correct pricing, quick disposal of animals, ease of transactions, and relatively better price realization. Butchers generally purchase animals regularly and have direct knowledge of prevailing market prices, body condition, and expected meat yield, which may facilitate faster transactions and reduce uncertainty for sheep farmers. Local markets ranked second among the marketing channels preferred by sheep sellers. The availability of multiple or variable buyers was the major reason for selecting local markets. The presence of several buyers provides farmers with an opportunity to compare offers, negotiate prices, and sell animals to the most suitable buyer. Easy transactions and remunerative prices also contributed to the preference for local markets (Shivakumar *et al.* 2019) ^[4]. However, transportation costs, market fees, time involved in marketing, and uncertainty regarding the final selling price might have prevented local markets from becoming the most preferred channel.

Consumers occupied the third rank, mainly due to remunerative prices and comparatively less price negotiation. Direct sale of sheep to consumers eliminates or reduces the involvement of marketing intermediaries, enabling farmers to retain a greater share of the consumer price (Dinakar *et al.* 2017) ^[1]. Such transactions may be particularly advantageous during festivals, social functions, and periods of increased demand for mutton. However, limited access to consumers and the irregular nature of consumer demand may restrict the wider adoption of this marketing channel.

Other farmers ranked fourth as preferred buyers. Remunerative prices and correct pricing were the major factors influencing sales to other farmers. Farmers purchasing animals for breeding, flock replacement, or expansion may evaluate animals based on breed characteristics, productive performance, age, and health status rather than solely on meat value (Venkataramanan *et al.* 2017) ^[6]. Familiarity and trust among farmers may also facilitate transparent transactions. Nevertheless, the relatively limited number of farmers purchasing animals may restrict the importance of this channel.

Local traders ranked fifth, despite home collection being reported as the major reason for selling sheep through them. Selling animals at the farm gate reduces transportation expenses, saves time, and minimizes the risks associated with transporting animals to distant markets. However, the lower preference for local traders could be attributed to limited bargaining power of farmers, inadequate market information, and the possibility of lower prices offered at the farm level. Thus, although local traders provide

convenience, farmers may prefer alternative channels that offer better price realization.

Middlemen were the least preferred marketing channel, although all sellers using this channel reported easy and fast transactions as the major reason for their preference (Vani *et al.* 2017) [5]. Middlemen facilitate quick transactions and connect farmers with potential buyers, particularly when farmers have limited access to markets. However, the involvement of intermediaries may reduce the producer's share in the consumer price and weaken the bargaining position of farmers, thereby explaining their low preference. Overall, the findings indicate that price realization, correct pricing, availability of multiple buyers, reduced price negotiation, home collection, and ease and speed of

transactions were the major factors determining the choice of marketing channels among sheep sellers (Gobena and Tona 2017) [2]. The preference for butchers and direct marketing channels suggests that farmers increasingly value transparent transactions and better economic returns. Strengthening direct linkages between sheep farmers, butchers, and consumers, establishing organized livestock markets, improving access to real-time market price information, promoting collective marketing through farmer groups, and developing digital livestock marketing platforms could reduce dependence on intermediaries and improve the marketing efficiency and profitability of sheep farming in the study area.

Table 1: Distribution of sellers based on their preference of buyers for selling their sheep

SL. No.	Marketing channels	Tirupati market (n=40)	Gudur market (n=40)	Other small markets of villages (n=40)	Garret's ranking score	Rank
1.	local traders	4 (10.0)	14 (35.0)	27 (67.5)	45 (37.5)	V
2.	middlemen	5 (12.5)	7 (17.5)	6 (15)	18 (15.0)	VI
3.	local markets	16 (40.0)	29 (72.5)	14 (35)	59 (49.17)	II
4.	butchers	23 (57.5)	23 (57.5)	19 (47.5)	65 (54.17)	I
5.	consumers	18 (45.0)	16 (40.0)	17 (42.5)	51 (42.5)	III
6.	other farmers	10 (25.0)	18 (45.0)	21 (52.5)	49 (40.82)	IV
Reasons for sale of sheep through particular channel						
1.	Local traders	n=4	n=14	n=27	n=45	
a)	Easy and fast	2 (50.0)	10 (71.43)	11 (40.74)	23 (51.11)	II
b)	Home collection	4 (100.0)	8 (57.14)	26 (96.3)	38 (84.44)	I
c)	Advance payments	-	2 (14.29)	3 (11.11)	5 (11.11)	III
d)	Correct pricing	-	1 (7.14)	-	1 (2.22)	IV
e)	Remunerative prices	-	-	1 (3.70)	1 (2.22)	IV
2.	Middlemen	n=5	n=7	n=6	N=18	
a)	Easy and fast	5 (100.0)	7 (100.0)	6 (100.0)	18 (100.0)	I
3	Local markets	n=16	n=29	n=14	N=59	
a)	Easy and fast	5 (31.25)	13 (44.83)	4 (28.57)	22 (37.29)	II
b)	Correct pricing	1 (6.25)	4 (13.79)	1 (7.14)	6 (10.17)	III
c)	Remunerative prices	5 (31.25)	14 (48.28)	3 (21.43)	22 (37.29)	II
d)	Variable buyers	10 (62.5)	8 (27.59)	10 (71.43)	28 (47.46)	I
4.	Butchers	n=23	n=23	n=19	N=65	
a)	Easy and fast	9 (39.13)	14 (60.87)	5 (26.32)	28 (43.08)	II
b)	Home collection	1 (4.35)	-	8 (42.11)	9 (13.85)	IV
c)	Correct pricing	13 (56.52)	8 (34.78)	8 (42.11)	29 (44.62)	I
d)	Remunerative prices	-	3 (13.04)	7 (36.84)	10 (15.38)	III
e)	Advance payments	-	1 (4.35)	6 (31.58)	7 (10.77)	V
5.	Consumers	n=18	n=16	n=17	N=51	
a)	Easy and fast	1 (5.56)	4 (25.0)	1 (5.88)	6 (11.76)	III
b)	Remunerative prices	16 (88.89)	7 (43.75)	11 (64.71)	34 (66.67)	I
c)	Least price negotiation	8 (44.44)	11 (68.75)	9 (52.94)	28 (54.9)	II
d)	Advance payments	-	-	2 (11.76)	2 (3.92)	IV
6.	Other farmers	n=10	n=18	n=21	N=49	
a)	easy and fast	1 (10.0)	-	1 (4.76)	2 (4.08)	IV
b)	Correct pricing	5 (50.0)	9 (50.0)	11 (52.38)	25 (51.02)	II
c)	Remunerative prices	8 (80.0)	8 (44.44)	12 (57.14)	28 (57.14)	I
d)	Least price negotiation	-	5 (27.78)	1 (4.76)	6 (12.24)	III

Note: The values in the parentheses indicate percentage of sellers in different markets

5. Conclusion

The present study concluded that sheep sellers preferred marketing channels that ensured better price realization, fair pricing, quick transactions, and convenience in the sale of animals. Butchers emerged as the most preferred buyers, followed by local markets, consumers, other farmers, local traders, and middlemen. Correct pricing and ease of transactions were the major factors influencing sales to

butchers, while the availability of multiple buyers encouraged farmers to sell through local markets. Remunerative prices motivated direct sales to consumers and other farmers, whereas home collection was the major advantage associated with local traders. Middlemen were the least preferred despite facilitating quick transactions. The findings emphasize the need to strengthen direct farmer-buyer linkages, improve livestock market

infrastructure, provide timely and transparent market price information, and promote collective and digital marketing initiatives. These measures could enhance the bargaining power of sheep farmers, reduce dependence on intermediaries, improve marketing efficiency, and increase the profitability and sustainability of sheep farming.

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