

Farmers' Perceptions towards Marketing Problems and Challenges in Floriculture in Solan District of Himachal Pradesh, India

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Abstract

Study was conducted on Farmers' Perceptions towards Marketing Problems and Challenges in Floriculture in Solan District of Himachal Pradesh. The key objectives of the study were to understand the marketing activities undertaken by floriculture growers trace out the key marketing problems faced by the farmers in floriculture and seek farmers' opinion to meet marketing challenges in floriculture business. For this paper, sample size of 60 farmers of Solan block of Himachal Pradesh was taken. Transportation was considered with highest awareness among florists, on account of its focal basis on the sustenance of floriculture business. Research study highlighted various marketing problems, like lack of market awareness, lack of transportation and storage facilities faced by the florists emerging as the greatest hurdle in the floriculture. The study highlighted that there is an urgent need of improving the awareness level regarding the floriculture business. And higher marketing efficiency and better returns to producers through direct retailing is a clear indicator for developing farmer's markets in the region.

Keywords: Farmers' perception, floriculture, marketing activities, marketing problems

1. Introduction

Floriculture is an activity with immense potential for generating remunerative self-employment among small and marginal farmers and earning of foreign exchange. Floriculture is the fast emerging and highly competitive industry (Godawa, 2005). Floriculture has emerged as a lucrative profession with the much higher potential for returns compared to other agro-horticulture crops (Gupta, 2011). Although India has been growing flowers for hundreds of year, floriculture as an industry for commercial purpose has taken root only during the last ten to fifteen years (Panwar and Phalke, 2011). Due to the impact of economic reform (1991-92), trade liberalization and global impact within the framework of WTO. Following these reforms, West Bengal has started commercial farming on a large scale from the mid 90s of the last century. The relative efficiency and profitability between commercial traditional flower crops and their competing field crops, examines the cost of production of flower crop with their seasonal market prices (Sarker, 2005). The science and art of commercial floriculture has been recognized as an economic activity with the potential for generating employment and earning valuable foreign exchange. The demand for flowers and ornamental plants for different needs like religious, official

ceremonies, parties, house decoration, weddings, funerals, etc. is on the rise. This demand for fresh flowers and plants is increasing world-wide over the coming years (Sudhagar, 2013). Floriculture in India, is being viewed as a high growth Industry. Owing to steady increase in demand of flower floriculture has become one of the important Commercial trades in Agriculture. Hence commercial floriculture has emerged as hi-tech activity-taking place under controlled climatic conditions inside greenhouse. Commercial floriculture is becoming important from the export angle. Indian floriculture industry has been shifting from traditional flowers to cut flowers for export purposes. The important commercial floricultural crops are rose, carnation, chrysanthemum, gerbera, gladiolus, gypsophila, liastris, orchids, anthurium, tulip and lilies (Mahatre, 2010). Flowers are very intimately associated with most social and religious activities in India. Flowers are also being used for extracting essential oils, which are used in perfumes. Many flowers have medicinal values and hence are used in Ayurveda. Therefore, flowers of different kinds are always in demand and there is need of understanding and improving marketing of flowers in India as well as abroad (Kumar, 2014).

Indian floriculture Industry is growing at a compounded annual growth rate of about 30% and is likely to cross INR



8000 crore marks in terms of value by 2015. In spite of the export potential, the performance of the Indian floriculture sector has not been encouraging. Indian floriculture industry is facing a number of challenges related to infrastructure, production, marketing and in export concerned (Kalmegh, 2016). Floriculture is the sunshine industry of India as it offers excellent self-employment and good remuneration for the small and marginal farmers (Menon, 2013). Demands for floricultural products are steadily increasing both in the domestic as well as export markets. India has made significant improvement in the production of flowers, particularly cut flowers, which have good potential for export. Floriculture is important from the economic perspective as well. Commercial floriculture has been steadily increasing with increased use of protected cultivation employing greenhouse, shade nets, polyhouse etc. Commercial flowers cultivation in India provides an opportunity for rural development owing to its higher returns per unit area and the new employment opportunities (Mishra and Ghosh, 2015).

2. Materials and Methods

The descriptive research design was adopted for the concerned research study. The research has been conducted in Solan district of Himachal Pradesh. The sample of the present study was collected from 60 floriculture farmers. Convenience sampling technique was used for the present study for collection of data. The study was conducted by using both Primary and Secondary data. The primary data for the present study was collected with the help of questionnaire. The secondary data for the present study was collected from journals, magazines, research articles, newspapers, and website. Simple mathematical and statistical tools, including Arithmetic mean, standard deviation and Total Weightage Score method were used for satisfying the objectives with a view of keeping the analysis simple and easy to understand. The arithmetic mean has been applied to study the opinion of the sample respondents on 5-point scale for different statements (Kothari, 2004). The standard deviation measures the absolute dispersion (or variability of distribution; the greater the amount of dispersion or variability), the greater the standard deviation, the greater will be the magnitude of the deviation of the values from their mean (Bhattacharya, 2006). Total weightage score method in which we have to provide different Weights according to their importance and multiply the values of the items (X) by the weights (W) as provided. Then add all the values to obtain the total weights of all the items and the one which get highest score will get the first rank and the one which get the lowest score will get the lowest rank (Kumar, 2008). Chi-square describes the magnitude of discrepancy between the theory and observation (Kumar, 2014). The concerned research paper was initiated with the key objectives, to study the marketing activities undertaken by floriculture growers, to trace out the key marketing problems faced by the farmers in floriculture,

to seek farmers' opinion to meet marketing challenges in floriculture business.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Gender status of the respondents

As per the graphical representation, the majority of the respondents were male. More specifically, 66.66% of the respondents were male and 33.33% were female (Table 1). Since farming has been largely managed and financially held by male respondents in the area.

Table 1: Gender status of the respondents

Gender	No. of respondents	% Age
MALE	40	66.67
FEMALE	20	33.33
Total	60	100

3.2. Age Status of the respondents

Age status of the floriculture farmers indicates that maximum (46.47%) respondents consisted of people with the age group of greater than equal to 50 years and least from the age group of 19-30 years (Table 2). Thus, it leads to this conclusion that in the farming community most of the workforce is of age group greater than equal to 50 years.

Table 2: Age status of the respondents

Age (Years)	No. of respondents	% Age
≤18	0	0
19-30	11	18.33
31-50	21	35
≤50	28	46.67
Total	60	100

3.3. Educational status of the respondents

In reference to understand the qualification details about the respondents, majority of the respondents were less than matriculate (43.34%) and followed by respondents having qualification between 10+2 and graduate (30%). In case of others (degree or diploma) there are only 15% respondents. And only few respondents were qualified up to post graduate and professional (11.66%) (Table 3). As respondents were employed in agribusiness at the very early age, so this might be the reason of low education status of the respondents in the area.

3.4. Occupational status of the respondents

While analysing the occupational status, the majority of the respondents (55%) were belongs to agriculture background. More specifically, (23.33%) of the respondents belongs other occupation and (21.67%) belongs to business occupation (Table 4). The reason behind more people belongs to



Table 3: Educational status of the respondents

Educational status	No. of respondents	% Age
Matriculation	26	43.34
10+2 and graduate	18	30
PG & professional	7	11.66
others (Degree or diploma)	9	15
Total	100	100

Table 4: Occupational status of the respondents

Occupational status	No. of respondents	% Age
Agriculture	33	55
Business	13	21.67
Others	14	23.33
Total	100	100

agriculture sector is that they hold more land in relation to others and very few are there who done business in relation to floriculture. So, it is interpreted that most of the respondents belongs to agriculture background.

3.5. Monthly income status of the respondents

The study summarizes that the monthly income of the respondents were shown high that is 38.33% respondent monthly income falls under the category of 1 lakh-3 lakh rupees and 26.67% respondents' monthly income falls under the category of less than and equal to 1 lakh rupees. There are 20% respondents with annual income between 3 lakh-5 lakh rupees and only 15% respondents with monthly income greater than and equal to 5 lakh rupees. Indicating that most of the respondents are INR 1 lakh to 3 lakh income group and the reason for this is lesser landholding and lesser dependency on agriculture for money (Table 5).

Table 5: Annual agricultural income status of respondents

Income Status (Annual)	No. of respondents	% Age
≤1 Lakh	16	26.67
1 Lakh-3Lakh	23	38.33
3 Lakh- 5Lakh	12	20
≥5 Lakh	9	15
Total	60	100

3.6. Farmable land holding status of the respondents

The study indicate that the farmable land occupied by the respondents, the maximum of respondents (36.67%) having less than 0.08 hectares land, between 0.08–0.16 hectares land there are (23.33%) respondents, there are (21.67%) respondents having 0.17–0.48 hectares land and very few respondents having greater than 0.48 hectares land (Table 6). Resulting that there are many floriculture farmers having land less than 0.08 hectares and that is the reason of their

Table 6: Farmable land of the respondents

Farmable land (Hectares)	No. of respondents	% Age
<0.08*	22	36.67
0.08-0.16	14	23.33
0.17-0.48	13	21.66
>0.48	11	18.37
Total	60	100

low income.

3.7. Experience status of the respondents

The data analysed indicated the experience status that there were largely respondents (36.67%) were having experience of 4–10 years, from (31.66%) respondents having greater than 20 year experience, from (26.66%) respondent having experience 11-20 years and very few respondent (5%) were having experience of less than and equal to 3 years (Table 7). Thus, it may have been observed that respondents who had 4–10 year experience are more and having good income in relation to others.

Table 7: Experience status of the respondents

Experience status (Years)	No. of respondents	% Age
≤3	3	5
4–10	22	36.67
11–20	16	26.66
>20	19	31.67
Total	60	100

3.8. Marketing activities in floriculture

While analysing the marketing activities of floriculture, the study presented the level of awareness of floriculture activities. As far as level of awareness of marketing activities is concerned it was observed that transportation is shown highest awareness followed by the knowledge of market price and product quality. The reason of showing highest awareness regarding transportation is that flowers could not be stored for long time, so to provide consumer with long lasting flowers, it is important to improve the temperature control during the long distance transportation of flowers, so the floriculture farmers tried to sell out these flowers as far as possible in the market. Hence these activities shows common feature that tends to create curiosity and interest in the farmers. Though others services like market information, market channel and packaging were also shows good interest but they had moderate awareness regarding marketing activities, reason behind that is these activities play a very important role in the floriculture business. While, grading and standardisation and market intermediaries linkage were shown least awareness. Because farmer had lack of testing facilities and lack of standards & grades in the floriculture

business. Further, marketing activities was analysed with the help of statistical tools including mean and standard deviation. As far as marketing activities were concerned, it was observed with mean value that the level of awareness was moderate among respondents. On the contrary standard deviation being lowest for moderate awareness level among the respondents concludes that growers were in consensus of their opinion to be moderate towards marketing activities undertaken by them (Table 8).

Table 8: Marketing activities in floriculture

Marketing Activities	Level of awareness			TWS*	Rank
	High (3)	Mod-erate (2)	Least (1)		
Market information	20	27	13	127**	IV
Product quality	24	28	8	128	III
Packaging	18	29	13	120	V
Grading and standardisation	16	24	20	114	VIII
Transportation	27	25	8	139	I
Market intermediaries linkage	11	26	23	108	IX
Knowledge of market price	28	17	15	133	II
Market analysis	16	25	19	117	VII
Knowledge of government marketing schemes	18	22	20	118	VI
Marketing channel	18	24	18	120	V
Mean	18.7	25.3	16.3		
SD	8.3	3.9	4.7		

3.9. Awareness level of florist towards transportation component emerged as the key marketing activity

Transportation component of marketing activities shows highest awareness because flowers are perishable goods, with limited life span. So this business required best transportation facility (Table 9).

Table 9: Awareness level of florist towards transportation component emerged as the key marketing activity

Awareness Level	No. of respondents	% Age
High	27	45
Moderate	25	41.7
Least	8	13.3
Total	60	100

3.10. Degree of usefulness or actual usage of the marketing activities

The study analysed the degree of usage of marketing activities

which is used by the floriculture farmers to benefit themselves, which shows that not just flow of information is their but also the information is brought to use by the farmers to ensure the benefit those could be drawn out of it (Table 10). Total Weightage Score method could help to draw that packaging was highest used activity by the farmers which is followed by the product quality and market information. Activities like, Market intermediaries linkage, Knowledge of market price and market information shown moderate usage, reason

Table 10: State the degree of usefulness or actual usage of the following marketing activities

Marketing Activities	Degree of usage			TWS*	Rank
	High (3)	Mod-erate (2)	Least (1)		
Market information	23	24	13	130	III
Product quality	24	23	13	131	II
Packaging	22	17	21	143**	I
Grading and Standardisation	21	18	20	118	VI
Transportation	16	25	19	117	VII
Market intermediaries linkage	24	20	16	129	IV
Knowledge of market price	19	25	16	123	V
Market analysis	17	24	19	118	VI
Knowledge of government marketing schemes	16	26	18	118	VI
Marketing channel	22	25	13	129	IV
Mean	20.4	22.7	16.3		
SD	5.6	4.06	3.09		

behind that people were moderate concerned about these activities. In case of least used activities, market intermediaries linkage, grading and standardisation and transportation are those activities which is less used by the floriculture farmers, reason is that they are less concerned and aware about these types of activities. Further the application of these activities were analysed through the mean and standard deviation. Since mean was highest i.e 22.7 in the moderate level of application, it indicate that farmers are more inclined towards the moderate level of usage of the activities so that they can more benefit themselves from the services. Standard deviation was least in case of least level of usage of the marketing activities that conveys there is a consensus in the opinion of the masses i.e. farmers regarding the moderate application of the marketing activities (Table 11).

3.11. Degree of usage of florist towards packaging component emerged as key marketing activity

In case of packaging, the degree of usage is highest because in

Table 11: Degree of usage of florist towards packaging component emerged as key marketing activity

Degree of Usage	No. of respondents	% Age
High	22	36.7
Moderate	17	28.3
Least	21	35
Total	60	100

floriculture business packaging play a very important role as it protects the flowers from any harmful substance (Table 12).

Table 12: State the Degree of Effectiveness of the given Marketing Problem in Floriculture Business

Marketing Activities	Level of effectiveness				Rank
	High (3)	Moderate (2)	Least (1)	TWS*	
Unreliable market information	17	24	19	118	VI
Lack of market awareness	28	25	7	141	I
lack of transportation and storage facilities	25	20	15	130**	II
Improper market yard facility	16	27	17	119	V
lack of demand analysis	22	26	12	130**	II
No strategic outlook in production	20	21	19	121	IV
Weak government marketing agencies support	20	25	15	125	III
Improper training and development for enhances marketing skill	20	21	18	121	IV
Communicating gap with intermediaries	18	23	19	119	V
Miscellaneous	15	25	20	115	VII
Mean	19.8	23.4	17.8		
SD	3.3	3.5	6.3		

3.12. Degree of effectiveness of the given marketing problem in floriculture business

While analysing the marketing problem of floriculture business, level of effectiveness in relation to these activities were segregated into three stages viz. High, Moderate and Least. In case of high level of effectiveness marketing problems like lack of market awareness, lack of transportation

and storage facilities shows more effectiveness. While on case of moderate level problems like, weak government marketing policies and miscellaneous shows moderate effect. In case of least effectiveness problems like, lack of market awareness and miscellaneous shows least effect. Further marketing problem was analysed with the help of statistical tools like mean and standard deviation and total weight age method. In total weight age method score, lack of market awareness shows high effectiveness, followed by lack of transportation and storage facilities and lack of demand analysis. But problems like weak government market agencies and no strategic outlook in production observed moderate effect and problems like unreliable market information and communicating gap with the intermediaries observed to be of least effectiveness as perceived by florists in Himachal Pradesh. Further means states that the level of effectiveness is high in case of moderate level that is 23.4 and standard deviation is least in case of high and moderate level this shows that there is a common consensus of the population where masses agree that the various problems which are faced by the farmers fall under the category of high and moderate (Table 13).

Table 13: Effectiveness level of floriculture farmers towards lack of market awareness component of marketing activity

Level of effectiveness	No. of respondents	% Age
High	28	46.7
Moderate	25	41.7
Least	7	11.6
Total	60	100

3.13. Effectiveness level of floriculture farmers towards lack of market awareness component of marketing activity

Lack of market awareness is highly faced problem by the florists reason behind that is Floriculture farmers are very less aware about this activity (Table 14).

3.14. Farmers' opinion towards suggestive measures to improvise the dissemination and utilisation of marketing information in floriculture business

The study revealed the various types of suggestive measures marked by the farmers according to the intensity of their application. Total weight age method helped to analysed that enhancement of credit facilities of marketing activities and under taking marketing programme was highly ranked suggestion by the farmers. The suggestions regarding the strengthen the marketing interventions of the government, insurance to cover market risk and establishment of farmer associations or committees for strengthening marketing observed moderate recommendation level. Further the suggestions regarding activities were analysed through mean and standard deviation. Since mean was highest i.e. 22.76 in the high recommendation level of suggestions, it indicated

Table 14: State your kind of suggestions from the information provides the marketing efforts in floriculture business

Marketing activities	Recommendation level				
	High (3)	Mod- erate (2)	Least (1)	TWS*	Rank
Undertaking marketing programme	28	20	12	136	II
consistent government- farmer-scientist-intermediaries meetings	22	23	15	127	V
Enhancement of credit facilities for marketing activities	29	24	7	142	I
Establishment of farmer associations or committees for strengthening marketing	22	21	17	125	VI
Exposure visit to different market	24	17	19	125	VI
Insurance to cover market risk	25	18	17	128**	IV
Strengthen the market interventions of government	23	23	14	129	III
Appropriate forecasting of market pricing	18	26	16	122	VII
Miscellaneous	15	26	19	116	VIII
Mean	22.67	22	15.55		
SD	4.1	5.8	4.4		

that farmers are more inclined towards gaining the knowledge and information about marketing activities so that they can more benefit themselves from the floriculture activities. Standard deviation was least in the high recommendation level that conveys there is a consensus in the opinion if the masses i.e farmer regarding the high recommendation level of suggestions regarding improving the marketing activities so that it could help the farmers to benefit them in a better way (Table 15).

3.15. Suggestion of florists towards enhancement of credit facility for marketing activity

In case of suggestions, enhancement of credit facilities for marketing activity shows highly recommendation level, because increase in credit facility helps the farmer to expand their business and would able to get adequate benefits from it. In reference to the demographic status of the research data, majority of the respondents were male, since farming

Table 15: Suggestion of florists towards enhancement of credit facility for marketing activity

Suggestions	No. of respondents	% Age
High	29	48.3
Moderate	24	40
Least	7	11.7
Total	60	100

has been largely managed and financially held by male. Maximum (46.47%) respondents consisted of people with the age group of ≥ 50 years, as in the farming community most of the work force is of age group greater than and equal to 50 years. In reference to the qualification status, majority of the respondents were less than matriculate (43.34%) as respondents were employed in agribusiness at the very early age. The monthly income largely falls under the category of 1 lakh-3lakh rupees. The farmable lands occupied by the respondents largely were ranging to less than 0.08 hectares of land. Florists were mainly having the horticulture experience of 4–10 years. While analysing the marketing activities of floriculture, it was observed that transportation is shown highest awareness, the reason of showing highest awareness regarding transportation is that flowers could not be stored for long time, so to provide consumer with long lasting flowers, it is important to improve the temperature control during the long distance transportation of flowers, so the floriculture farmers tried to sold out these flowers as far as possible in the market. The data also signifies the degree of usage of marketing activities which is used by the floriculture farmers to benefit themselves, which shows that not just flow of information is their but also the information is brought to use by the farmers to ensure the benefit those could be drawn out of it. Packaging was highest used activity by the farmers because flowers have a limited life span. A correctly adopted packaging technology helps the florists to securing cushioning the product and other necessary productive features. While analysing the marketing problem, lack of market awareness, lack of transportation and storage facilities are faced more by the florists because farmers are very less aware about the marketing facilities, reason behind that is deduction of more charge by the middlemen and agents did not take the consent of the farmers while selling the produce to a particular price. As we know that flowers are perishable type of good with limited life span so it will require adequate storage and transportation facilities for protecting the florist from loss. The research study also signifies various suggestive measures marked by the farmers, such as enhancement of credit facilities of marketing activities and undertaking marketing Programme was highly ranked suggestion by the farmers. So that it could help the farmers to benefit in a better way (Table 15).

4. Conclusion

The pertinent problems faced by growers in study area were non-availability of planting material, labour, market, low cost transportation, fair trading practices and market information. However, no significant difference between problems of small and large farmers, indicate that both faced these problems in same severity. Various suggestive measures marked by farmers, such as enhancement of credit facilities of marketing activities and undertaking marketing programme was highly ranked suggestion by farmers, that can help farmers to benefit in a better way.

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