Retail Consumer Behaviour of Floriculture Industry in Eastern India: An Empirical Study

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ABSTRACT : Floriculture industry is one of the largest industries in India where India has an immense potentiality concerning to expansion of the product range and various commercial activities. These activities consist of flower trading, supplying saplings, greens and ornamental plants, landscaping in real estate market, floral designing and custom made products in weddings and festivities, extracting essential oils, natural dye from flowers and preparing ingredients in pharmaceutical industry. In India, mainly fresh flowers are exported from Karnataka, Maharashtra and dried flowers from Tamil Nadu and West Bengal. Although Indian floriculture exports have largely captured European, Japanese and Australian markets but International market is highly competitive due to the presence of African countries, and Asian neighbours in this segment. Except the international demand, domestic demand is also very high with growing rate of around 40% per annum. In the present scenario, Indian Export Oriented Units in this sector are mainly dependent on technological support which comes from various foreign countries like France, USA, Holland, etc. The other significant issues are related with the unorganized market structure, unscientific packaging and transportation of flowers, low level of product diversification and differentiation, high import tariff in African countries, non-availability of perishable carriers, insufficient infrastructural support, lack of quality control and certification, deficiencies in cold chain management, etc. Recently, private investments in floriculture industry have been initiated by reputed corporate houses like TATA group, Birla, ESSAR group, etc. Several initiatives for marketing and growth of floriculture sector have been already taken by the Government. However, more dynamic strategies are to be adopted by the Government along with the private organizations and research institutions in order to fulfill domestic as well as international demands of this sector. In our present study, a deliberate attempt will be made to frame a conceptual model on retail consumer behaviour of rural Floriculture Industry in Eastern India. The findings of this paper will depict the retail consumer behaviour which will help us to identify the critical factors in retail floriculture business. This study will also prescribe deliberate strategies for the overall improvement of this sector in the days to come.

Key Words: Floriculture industry, Retail consumer behaviour, Conceptual model, Deliberate strategies, Eastern India.

I. PRELUDE

Floriculture is the major segment of horticulture concerned with commercial production, marketing, and sale of bedding plants, cut flowers, potted flowering plants, foliage plants, flower arrangements, and noncommercial home gardening.Floriculture is an emerging area with great potential both in the domestic as well as foreign market. It is now very prosperous industry in Asian countries including India.

Floriculture is one of the booming industries in our country. It has huge potentiality to generate rural employment as well as to earn foreign exchange. It is now one of the important commercial crops in India.

It is now being used as important raw materials in multifarious manufacturing industries for the production of perfumes, medicines and confectionaries. In the recent decade, this industry has shown significant progress. It is now not restricted to as normal agricultural products made by few rural families. Now different farmers are growing and selling their products beyond the national frontier and earns huge quantum of foreign earnings. These flowers are now reaching a far

distance due to the availability of airfreight and advanced cooling system.

After the advent of LPG policy in 1991 and EXIM policies of 1992-2014, this sector has got immense importance in the contribution of foreign earnings. Continuous demand and much higher return in comparison to other agricultural products, farmers are showing their full interest to this rosy sector. The demand of this sector has been increased due to rapid urbanization, advanced technology, infrastructural development, hotel and tourism industry, temples, rising per capital income, changes in life styles, etc.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Consumption and demand of flowers are rising over the world. There are 140 countries growing flowers. However, European countries have developed their flora business very early but they could not produce enough quantity. However, new production centres have been developing in Asian countries. Even though, Latin America and African countries have increased their production of flowers. Recently, India and other Asian countries have emerged as development centres of floriculture.

There has been a rapid growth in demand and consumption of floriculture products in recent decades. Cultivation and consumption of flowers have been part of traditionover the world.Several countries like Netherlands, Italy, Germany and Japan have strong tradition of growing and consuming flowers. The expansions in area and production of flowers in non-traditional regions have been one of the noticeable features. Recently, new production centres are developing in Latin America, Africa and Asia to meet the increasing demand of importing countries and to expand also their domestic market. Columbia, Chile, Kenya, Rhodesia, Morocco, South Africa, Israel, India, China and Shrilanka are now the new floriculture centres. The floriculture market has concentrated in Western Europe, North America and Japan. Western Europe accounts for half of the world's cut flower production and consumption of the product. The new markets have also emerged in Europe are Poland, Hungary, Slovakia and Ireland. The mostly preferred cut flowers in the international market are roses, tulip, chrysanthemum, gerbera, orchids and gypsophilla.

However, a very few studies have been conducted on floriculture industry throughout the globe. Miller (1983) performed an extensive sub-sector analysis for the fresh cut-flower industry in the U.S. by analyzing the structure, conduct and performance of the existing conditions of the industry in an attempt to predict future trends. Miller observed that there were special calendar occasions when the demand for flowers was substantially higher and other non-calendar occasions where the demand was substantially lower. He also determined that the demand for flower arrangements was inelastic, meaning that consumers are not highly responsive to changes in price of floral products.

Tilburg (1984) analyzed a panel of cut flower and potted plant consumers in the Netherlands to relate aspects of consumer behaviour to marketing variables and demographic characteristics of households. He identified three market segments: the first segment consisted of 44 percent of the households and was sensitive to prices but insensitive to national advertisements; the second segment consisted of 40 percent of the households, and was insensitive to both prices and advertisements; and the third segment, with 13 percent, was sensitive to both prices and advertising.

Behe (1989) analyzed consumer floral purchasing behaviour of Pennsylvanians at the retail level. She recommended three ways to segment retail flower markets: by product, volume of purchase, and by location of the purchase. Behe et al. (1992a) carried out an analysis of consumer purchases of floral products in Ohio supermarkets using principal components analysis that yielded 34 independent factors accounting for 64% of the total variance affecting floral purchases. These factors were grouped into five main categories, including, product, consumer, store, use (gift), and location. Behe et al. (1992b) followed up on her previous study and applied cluster analysis to identify the most important factors affecting floral buying decisions by market segments. She used demographic characteristics and purchase factors identified in her previous work to profile market segments and distinguishing elements.

Becker (1993) studied differences in service quality between supermarkets and florists in Texas. He found that the differences on the types of retail outlets were based on the types of products sold, custom design and

other in-store services, delivery options and convenience.

Rimal (1998) analyzed the effects of generic and brand promotions on sales of fresh cut-flowers at the retail level in the U.S.

Girapunthong (2002) analyzed the demand drivers for fresh cut-flowers and their substitutes in the U.S. Girapunthong found that all direct price effect coefficients with the seasonal and actual variables were statistically significant and changes in the relative prices had a significant impact on flower market shares among fresh cutflowers, potted flowering plants, and dry/artificial flowers.

Ward (2004) evaluated the impacts of the Flower Promotion Organization (FPO) advertising campaign on cut-flower sales, concluding that the promotions have impacted the demand for flowers through increasing buyer frequency and through attracting new buyers. He found that about 87 percent of the increase in demand for the promotional programs is from the increased number of transactions per buyer. Ward found that the demographic group that responded the most to the promotional program were female buyers that purchase flowers for self-use. This was consistent with the target of the FPO promotion program.

Yue and Behe (2008) analyzed consumer preferences for different floral retail outlets. They used a consumer panel data collected by the American Floral Endowment from 1992 to 2005 were used to evaluate consumers' choice of different floral retail outlets among box stores, traditional freestanding floral outlets, general retailer, other stores, and direct-to-consumer channels.

Palma and Ward (2010) estimated ornamental demand for four different ornamental products, including cut flowers, plants, dry/artificial and outdoor. They divided demand into two components, market penetration and buying frequency. They concluded that demand drivers for ornamental consumption was driven by the entry of new buyers rather than repeat buying customers increasing their number of transactions.

III. RESEARCH GAP

From the literature reviewed it is evident that there have been a limited studies conducted on the retail consumer behaviour of floriculture industry in eastern

India. It is also evident that in the study location there have been fewer studies conducted in the floriculture sector. Undoubtedly these studies have contributed in their own way but they have also left certain gaps that need to be addressed.

IV. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The existing reviews of literature have helped us to frame the following objectives in our study. The objectives are as follows:

1. Toexplorethe determinants which have a profound influence on customer satisfaction in the selected floriculture markets located in eastern part of India.

2. To find out the degree of influence of the determinants oncustomer satisfaction.

3. In this study, the use of Structural Equation Model (SEM) in validating the model is a valuable contribution. It will help the retailers in designing strategies according to their customer's response against customer satisfaction questionnaire.

V. HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

H1:'Features of the Product' positively influences the 'Customer Purchase Intention'.

H2:'Features of the Store' negatively influences the 'Customer Purchase Intention'.

H3:'Features of the Sales Associate' negatively influences the 'Customer Purchase Intention'.

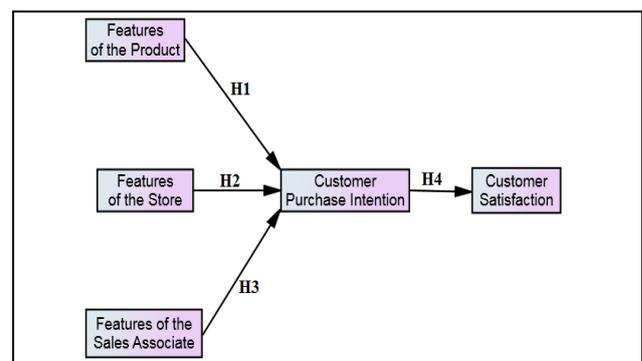**H4:**'Customer Purchase Intention' positively influences the 'Customer Satisfaction'.

Figure 1: Hypothesized Research Model Establishment on Customer Satisfaction in Flower Industry

VI. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Sources of Data

Primary Data

The primary data collection has been done through the questionnaire filled by the respondents randomly selected from three metropolitan cities located in Eastern India.

Sampling Method

We have adopted convenience sampling technique for the selection of 3 metropolitan cities mainly Kolkata, Bhubaneswar and Patna in Eastern India. After that, responses from 196 respondents were finally collected through simple random sampling from three metropolitan cities for this study.

Sample Size

We have distributed the questionnaire among 250 respondents and finally we got 196 properly filled up questionnaire from them. The analysis is finally done on the basis of the responses from the 196 respondents.

Area of Study

The study has been concentrated to evaluate the Customer Satisfaction which is deemed necessary for an organization especially in floriculture sector.We targeted the sample elements for our study from 3 metropolitan cities (Kolkata, Bhubaneswar and Patna) in Eastern India through convenience sampling technique.

Period of the Study

This Research work have undergone at Eastern India during the period of 1stMarch, 2017 to 15th May, 2017.

Scale Selection

In this study, hypothesized research model (Figure 1) has been established with the help of both secondary and primary data. It was developed by collected factors from literature review as well as interviews of academic experts in flower industry. A structure questionnaire was prepared with related variables for survey. Constructs and related variables were extracted directly from literature reviewand few probable variables were added after discussion with the field expert. 5 point Likert scale (5: Strongly Agree, 4: Agree, 3: Neutral, 2: Disagree and 1: Strongly Disagree)has been used for measuring the responses of consumers related with flower industry.

Analysis and Results

Structure equation modeling has been used herefor developing the model and establishing the hypothesesby the help of AMOS 20.0 software. Validity and model fitnesshave been judged through measurement and structural model. Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) by the help of SPSS-21 describes the questionnaire validation through data reduction method.

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) statistics, predicts if data are likely to factor well, based on correlation and partial correlation. There is a KMO statistic for each individual variable, and their sum is the KMO overall statistic. KMO varies from 0 to 1.0 and KMO overall should be 0.60 or higher to proceed with factor analysis. In our study, we got the KMO of .775 which is quite logical to proceed for factor analysis. In this study, KMO and Bartlett's Test (Table 1) shows the appropriateness of Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA).The result is shown below:

Table 1: KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		**.775**
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	2980.593
	Df	136
	Sig.	**<0.001**

Cronbach's alpha is designed as a measure of internal consistency; that whether all items within the instrument measure the same thing. Alpha is measured on the same scale as a Pearson r (correlation coefficient) and typically varies between 0 and 1. The closer the alpha is to 1.00, the greater the internal consistency of items in the instrument being assessed. In our study, the value of alpha is .712 which is highly desirable. Cronbach's alpha for all items (Table 2) which is greater than 0.70, shows the satisfactory range of reliability

Table 2: Overall Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
0.712	**17**

Through the result of factor analysis, we can explain the total variance and the proportionate variance of each factor in our study. Variables with factor loading of above 0.5 have created 5 different factors which are extracted from Rotated Component Matrix. These factors explain total 82.329 % of the variations (Table 3). The results are stated below:

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Table 3: Result of Factor Analysis - Rotated Component Matrix (a)

Variables / Items	Rotated Component Matrix				
	Component				
	Features of the Store	Features of the Product	Customer Satisfaction	Customer Purchase Intension	Features of the Sales Associates
q5	**.909**	-.086	-.049	-.085	.260
q7	**.865**	-.119	-.065	.001	.216
q6	**.853**	-.040	-.045	-.283	.019
q4	**.835**	-.116	-.073	-.105	.370
q8	**.781**	-.080	-.024	-.315	-.120
q11	-.091	**.923**	.142	.165	-.035
q14	-.028	**.855**	.183	.042	-.041
q13	-.090	**.825**	.006	.237	-.049
q12	-.167	**.786**	.291	.155	-.016
q17	.008	.160	**.892**	.084	.037
q16	-.122	.164	**.882**	.144	-.060
q15	-.057	.173	**.870**	.163	-.037
q1	-.178	.191	.183	**.879**	-.089
q3	-.217	.171	.090	**.829**	-.114
q2	-.177	.206	.180	**.770**	-.205
q10	.172	.006	.039	-.228	**.894**
q9	.272	-.103	-.082	-.103	**.894**
% of Variance Explained	**22.862**	**18.394**	**15.090**	**14.575**	**11.408**
Cronbach's alpha	**0.928**	**0.903**	**0.895**	**0.883**	**0.897**

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 6 iterations.

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Analysis of Moment Structure (AMOS)

This is very powerful multivariate technique to express interdependence between the variables through a path diagram. We conducted Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) on the basis of the result of exploratory factor analysis by using software called analysis of moment structure (AMOS version 7). We have used CFA to determine the goodness of fit between hypothesized model & sample data.

Then, the fitness indexes were checked as follows and hypotheses were tested. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was performed for emphasizing on testing how well defined variables represent factors.

Table 4: Fit Indices of Confirmatory Factor Analysis for Structural Model

Fit Index	Acceptable Threshold Levels	Structural Model Values
χ2/df (Chi-Square / Degree of Freedom)	Values less than 3	**0.087**
RMSEA (Root Mean-Square Error of Approximation)	Values less than 0.06	**0.001**
GFI (Goodness of Fit Index)	Values greater than 0.90	**0.999**
AGFI (Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index)	Values greater than 0.90	**0.997**
NFI (Normed Fit Index)	Values greater than 0.90	**0.999**
CFI (Comparative Fit Index)	Values greater than 0.90	**1.000**

Here the fit indices (Table 4) of Structural model (Figure 2) indicate the acceptable range and prove a good model fit.
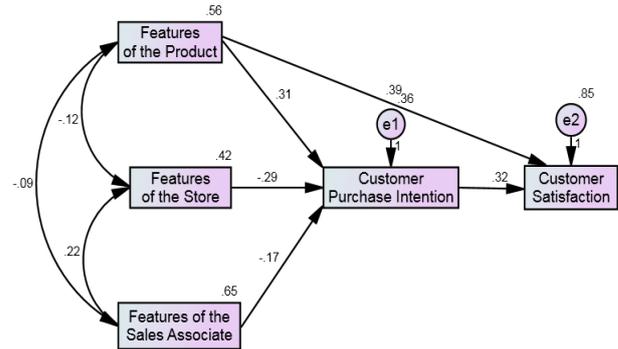

Figure 2: Path Diagram of Hypothesized Structural Modelon Customer Satisfaction in Flower Industry

Table 5: Squared Correlations between Factors in Measurement Model

Factors	Features of the Product	Customer Purchase Intension	Features of the Store	Features of the Sales Associates	Customer Satisfaction
Features of the Product	**0.785**				
Customer Purchase Intention	0.283	**0.832**			
Features of the Store	-0.147	-0.298	**0.756**		
Features of the Sales Associates	-0.074	-0.260	0.272	**0.844**	
Customer Satisfaction	0.292	0.284	-0.167	-0.097	**0.872**

*Diagonal elements are **Average Variance Extracted (AVE).**

Table 6: Measurement Model Results

Factors	Variables	Standardized Regression Estimate	Construct Reliability (CR)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)	Maximum Shared Variance (MSV)	Average Shared Variance (ASV)
Features of the Product	q11	0.844	0.865	0.616	0.085	0.048
	q12	0.786				
	q13	0.731				
	q14	0.774				
Customer Purchase Intention	q1	0.867	0.871	0.693	0.089	0.079
	q2	0.812				
	q3	0.817				
Features of the Store	q4	0.749	0.869	0.571	0.089	0.053
	q5	0.794				
	q6	0.768				
	q7	0.734				
	q8	0.733				
Features of the Sales Associates	q9	0.818	0.832	0.712	0.074	0.039
	q10	0.869				
Customer Satisfaction	q15	0.868	0.905	0.760	0.085	0.051
	q16	0.879				
	q17	0.868				

. Higher Standardized Regression Estimates which are more than 0.7 show higher reliability of variables. Construct Reliabilities (More than 0.7) indicates the internal consistency among the variables.As per Hair et al. (2010) & Field (2009)the following conditions (1.AVE> 0.5; 2.CR > AVE; 3. MSV < AVE;4.ASV <

AVE)prove the convergent and discriminant validityin Measurement model.Here, AVE values are also greater than corresponding squared inter-construct correlation (SIC), so it proves discriminant validity (Table 5 & Table 6).

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Table 7: Path Analysis of Structural Model

Measurement Path			Hypothesis	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P-Value	Assessment
Customer Purchase Intension	←	Features of the Store	H2	-.293	.074	-3.956	***	Supported
Customer Purchase Intension	←	Features of the Product	H1	.306	.059	5.203	***	Supported
Customer Purchase Intention	←-	Features of the Sales Associates	H3	-.167	.059	-2.851	.004	Supported
Customer Satisfaction	←	Customer Purchase Intention	H4	.324	.101	3.211	.001	Supported
Customer Satisfaction	←	Features of the Product	New	.391	.096	4.060	***	Supported

*Significant Regression co-efficient (P<0.01)

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Path Analysis for Hypotheses Testing and Research Findings (refer to Table 7):

1. **H1: 'Features of the Product' positively influences the 'Customer Purchase Intention'.**

Structural model supports this hypothesis. The path coefficient is significant (p<0.01) statistically and it has the expected positive sign (+0.306) which means 'Features of the Product' positively influences the 'Customer Purchase Intention'. It implies that if the quality product is available at fair price then customers will show their purchase intension in the retail market in floriculture industry.

2. **H2: 'Features of the Store' negatively influences the 'Customer Purchase Intention'.**

The P-value for the path co-efficient from 'Features of the Store'to 'Customer Purchase Intention' is negative (-0.293) and significant (p<0.01), indicating that 'Features of the Store' negatively influences the 'Customer Purchase Intention'.Therefore hypothesis is supported. If the store hours, delivery time of the store,

decoration facilitates, etc are not taken care of then customers will not be willing to purchase the products from the retail market.

3. **H3: 'Features of the Sales Associate' negatively influences the 'Customer Purchase Intention'.**

The P-value for the path co-efficient from 'Features of the Sales Associate'to 'Customer Purchase Intention' is negative (-0.167) and significant (p<0.01), indicating that 'Features of the Sales Associate' negatively influences the 'Customer Purchase Intention'.Therefore hypothesis is supported. If sufficient and skilled associates are scare in the market then customers will not be motivated towards the retail floriculture market.

4. **H4: 'Customer Purchase Intention' positively influences the 'Customer Satisfaction'.**

Structural model supports this hypothesis. The path coefficient is significant (p<0.01) statistically and it has the expected positive sign (+0.324) which means 'Customer Purchase Intention' positively influences the 'Customer Satisfaction'. There is a direct proportional relationship between purchase intension and customer

satisfaction. If customers are not satisfied with the market then they will not show their willingness toward purchasing the floriculture produce from the retail market.

VII. FINDINGS

This study gives on light on possible influence of customer purchase intention which ultimately leads to customer satisfaction. Our empirical result shows that features of the Product' positively influences the 'Customer Purchase Intention' but 'Features of the Store' and 'Features of the Sales Associate' negatively influences the 'Customer Purchase Intention'.Our empirical study confirms that customer purchase intention is a significant determinant of customer satisfaction in the floriculture Industry in the Eastern part of our country. We have also got a very interesting result in our study where we have observed that features of the product directly influences the customer satisfaction in the retail market of this industry.

VIII. CONCLUSIONS

The customer satisfaction is the ultimate motto of any organization. The customer with optimum level of satisfaction mobilizes and generates goodwill to the business. The customer satisfaction is highly dependent upon features of the product, features of the stores and sales associates.

So, in a nutshell, we may assert that the organization has to pay more attention on delivering qualitative product at a reasonable price. Retailers have to focus on proper maintenance of stores in respect of convenient sore hours, prompt delivery, decoration facility, etc. This sector has to give emphasis on deployment of adequate and skilled sales associate in order to draw the attention of existing and potential retail consumers. All these things will satisfy the retail consumers and they will be highly motivated to purchase the floriculture products from the retailers.

IX. FUTURE SCOPE

There are some limitations of the study that could be addressed in future research. Due to the exploratory nature of the study, only three factors deemed to be the most important in influencing consumer purchase Intention'has been included. Another limitation of this study is that it only focuses on the floriculture segment.

Further study may be carried on using this methodology for multifarious segments to confirm the model to ensure the model identified for customer satisfaction. Finally, further study may be addressed the customer satisfaction issues on all other typology of segments in horticulture industry. We have only observed the customers' behaviour in the Eastern part of our country. It can be also extended to other parts of our country to predict the behaviour of retail consumer behaviour.

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Annexure: 1

Factors	Questions on different Items
Customer Purchase Intention	q1: You will select flower retail stores for regular uses.
	q2: You will select flower retail stores for occasions or events.
	q3: You will recommend others to select the flower retail stores for their uses.
Features of the Store	q4: Store hours are convenient for the customer.
	q5: Stores maintain proper delivery time.
	q6: Stores provide offers for bulk purchase / occasions.
	q7:Stores provide assistance of Associated Facilities like Decoration.
	q8:Stores use technologies (Smart Phone Apps etc.) for increasing sales.
Features of the Sales Associates	q9: Sufficient sales associates are available.
	q10: Knowledgeable and skilled sales associates are available.
Features of the Product	q11: Quality flower is available.
	q12: Flower price is fare.
	q13: Variety of flowers are available
	q14: Sufficient stock is available.
Customer Satisfaction	q15: You are satisfied with retail flower service.
	q16: Flower retailers are reliable.
	q17: Flower retailers provide customized product.