

# Exploring the Floral Marketing Practices: An Investigation of the Retail Floral Traders of Bangladesh

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## Abstract

The study of “Floral marketing” has become a catchphrase in both academic and practical arena, thus different issues related to floral marketing have been researched in many international studies. This study is designed on considering the contemporary trends of Floral Marketing in Bangladesh with the view of different Bangladeshi flower farmers and retail floral traders. For assessing the recent scenario, an exploratory research has been conducted. Investigations were carried out during the month of October 2016-January 2017 based on the group discussions and thorough case studies on the Bangladeshi florist business traders. The results reveal that the floral traders haven’t tailored these marketing concerns yet. Besides, it gives a rational perceptive to Bangladeshi traders of utilizing this floral marketing theory to bloom this industry by managing different complexities.

**Keywords:** Flower, Floral Traders, Floral Marketing, Marketing Mix, Bangladesh.

## 1. Introduction:

From the past few years, the marketing of floral products has increased dramatically throughout the world. Today the floral industry has developed into one of the major rising industries in different countries of the world as the uses of flower are increasing day by day. Actually from very starting of civilization, flower is considered as an indicator of worship and beauty. People habitually use these floral products in most of their rituals like marriage, birthday, funeral, and religious offerings and sometimes in social, political, and historical events. The color and exquisiteness of flower permit everyone to convey messages and to express one’s feelings immaculately (Mannan et al. 2007, African Business Magazine, 2012).

Furthermore, in Bangladesh step by step our florist business is also flourishing. The uses of flower in different occasions have gained immense thrust among the people of the country. Today the universal usage has shaped a real drift of producing flower on a commercial basis to congregate its increasing demand in the world market, but in Bangladesh floral industry hasn’t bloomed yet instead of a high potential market. Therefore, this research would endow with a through guidance to the entire Bangladeshi floral traders by exploring the current scenario and various relevant issues. Hence, as there is a substantial demand of flower in Bangladesh, so this study can also assist the young entrepreneurs to create a new floral venture and eventually to contribute in the development of the economy by earning foreign currency.

## 2. Objectives of the Study:

### 2.1 Broad Objective:

To figure out the current scenario of floral industry of Bangladesh as well as the various marketing initiatives taken by our businessperson to market flowers.

### 2.2 Specific Objective

- To study and take an in-depth knowledge of floral marketing and floral branding.
- To analyze the future potentials of floral industry of Bangladesh.
- To anticipate the different obstacles in the way of development of this industry.
- To recommend some suggestions to enhance the practice of floral marketing in Bangladesh.

## 3. Research Design:

To conduct this study, the *exploratory research design* has been used and the qualitative methods such as Internet reviews and structured interviews to gain deep insight of floral marketing practices, current trends, mechanisms etc. The literature part is based on secondary data which is gathered from the websites and journals. Also a collection of group discussions with the farmers and in-depth case studies on the floral traders of Dhaka city were executed during the month of October 2014-January 2015, to study the existing practices and prospects of Floral Marketing in Bangladesh. The implementation of multiple approaches permitted the researchers to improve the validity of the findings.

## 4. Review of Existing Literature:

In the late 19th century in England, floral industry started its journey as the many British people cultivated different types of flowers on enormous places (Vanzile, 2009). The present day flower industry is a global and

dynamic industry, which has achieved significant growth rates during the past few decades. Global consumption of cut flowers is estimated at a staggering € 30 to € 40 billion per year with Europe and North America being the leading markets (Mou, 2012).

Floriculture is a major global industry in both developing and developed countries. Global trade volume is estimated to be worth more than \$100bn per annum (African Business Magazine, 2012). The global cut flower industry provides a vital income for millions of people in countries like Kenya and Colombia. Like many other industries that rely on a large supply of cheap labor, a lot of the jobs involved in the flower industry - such as grading, packing, harvesting, tending beds, watering and so on - require limited skills. Many of the workers employed in the industry are poor and so susceptible to exploitation (Ethical Trading Initiative, 2011).

This florist business sector flourished because flowers are presented as a show of affection from the very beginning of civilization. For centuries, flowers have been played as an imperative part in our physical and psychological comfort too. Flowers have been used to soothe our emotions through the abolition of bad odors, and sometimes bringing us out of gloominess. Moreover, Flowers play a fundamental function in human behavior and culture, bringing serenity and peace of mind. From a symbol of love, flowers have been transformed into an industry, generating both income as well as employment (Singh, 2006). Flowers are not only an attractive element for humans; rather they attract insects and birds, which serve as pollinators for the plant itself. The seeds that flowers drop and pollinate locally produce more plants, and more fruits and vegetables for us to eat. In addition, certain bugs--such as bees, produce honey from the nectar of the flowers, but also pollinate the flowers as they do so--allowing them to produce seeds (The Financial Express, 2014).

At this time, floriculture is absolutely a new venture in Bangladesh. It has now become an indivisible part of our culture. People frequently bring into play flowers in all their ceremonies like wedding, birthday and marriage day greetings, and religious offerings and sometimes in social, political, and historical occasions (Mannan et al. 2007). Farmers' concern on flower is inevitable because flowers give 3-5 times and 1.5-2 times more returns than obtained from rice and vegetable cultivation, respectively (The Financial Express, 2014). About 70% of the total country's demand of flowers is supplied by Jessore (Islam & Rashedur, 2013). Likewise, 10,000 hectares of land cover flower cultivation taking the lead by Jessore district (Arya, 2014). Over 4,000 farmers are cultivating flower and foliage and almost 200,000 people are closely or distantly involved in the floriculture business as their source of revenue (Islam & Rashedur, 2013). The main types of flowers cultivated by the Bangladeshi farmers are rose, tuberose, gladiolus, marigold, orchids, lily, tagor, jasmine, chrysanthemum etc (Mannan et al. 2007).

Consequently, the flower farming has turned into a vital and profitable enterprise in the Agriculture sector of Bangladesh. Flower fostering as a money-making project was launched in our country in the 1980's. Our country has a very auspicious condition for flower fostering, due to variation in climate, topography, and vegetation. Recently flower is added into the export item. It is an emerging field that has an enormous opportunity to contribute to the GDP of the country (Islam & Rashedur, 2013). In another study, almost 20 Lac people are occupied themselves in flower business - as said by Bangladeshi flower businessperson. (Prothom Alo, 30<sup>th</sup> April, 2016).

Flowers and floral products are exported from Bangladesh to Pakistan, Italy, Portugal, Saudi Arabia, India, United States, South Korea, Philippines, Singapore, Japan, Germany, Britain, Denmark, and France (Dhaka Tribute Newspaper, 2014). Recently, Bangladesh has received Tk. 60 crore through exporting flowers during FY 2009 -2010.

As a result, this floral marketing is a profitable venture due to the low production cost that creates enormous employment opportunities (Islam & Rashedur, 2013). Bangladesh not only exports flowers to other countries but also imports some foreign flowers such as chrysanthemum, tuberose, gladiolus from India; orchids, gerbera, anthurium, and Thai rose from Thailand every year to meet the local demand. And thus, Bangladesh has to pay about Tk. 2-3 million for every year (Arya, 2014). Various international studies have been undertaken in the last few decades that provide diverse observation on the state of flower cultivation, types of floral products & consumers, purchasing pattern of floral consumers, packaging etc. The literature on floral marketing in the context of Bangladesh is still moderately limited, both in terms of scope and depth of analysis. Moreover, few studies have focused specifically on floriculture development, flower production, problems faced by farmers, and suggestions for farmers. Therefore, the analysis of this paper is especially relevant and timely in order to make suitable marketing decisions.

## **5. The Conceptual Background of Floral Marketing:**

Flowers have occupied core position in people's lives since the most primitive ancient Egyptian times (Callahan, 2014). From that time, the uses of flowers have increased day by day to all the people across the globe. Eventually, now it has developed into a very fast growing as well as competitive industry to the business people (Behe, 1993). To survive in this florist business arena and to persuade the floral customers in a more convincing way, every floral business person is now trying to adopt the floral marketing activities. With this strong motive,

the concept arose of *Floral Marketing* and *Floral Branding*. In the concept of *Floral Marketing*, a business person tries to bestow the floral products a proper recognition with creative branding elements and by packing and shaping it in an attractive manner.

Basically, *Floral Products* refer flowering and foliage plants and fresh-cut flowers and greens. To tailor these floral products, a person must need to determine the kind of service he or she wants to provide to the floral customers. Based on this, there are three major dimensions of a florist business: Wholesale florist service retailers with fresh-cut flowers and potted plants, Retail florist service and Floral supplier. In the study of Behe et al. 1992b, he analyzed the demographic factors and classified the floral purchasers into five segments based on their perceptions: Friendly Buyers, Selfers, Married Men, Annuals, and Educated Mothers (Behe, 1993). Thus in this age, floral professionals and researchers recognize that more investigations need to be conducted to accumulate further specific information about these floral consumers. The more true perception of these floral purchasers can be collected, the more accurate floral marketing strategy can be undertaken to sway them more evocatively.

## **6. Floral Marketing: Why Significant?**

Flower cultivation is an exceptionally forthcoming big business in Bangladesh, which ensures higher profitability. As Bangladesh has a very favorable climate to turn the flower business into booming industry. Flower-farming shows auspicious results to improve farmer's socioeconomic condition, increases self-employment opportunity, promotes entrepreneurship in both urban and rural areas and boosts export-trade to earn foreign currency, it proves to be a potential tool for poverty alleviation. It plays a crucial role in employment creation and poverty lessening as well as it contributes in the national economy through earning precious foreign currency (Mou, 2012). Bangladesh export flowers and floral products over the years have made significant contributions to the Gross Domestic Product (Floral Art Magazine). At present in our country, more than 25,000 families are involved in cultivating flowers and 200,000 people are directly and indirectly dependent on this sector. As there are millions of people already working in this sector, so by developing more of this sector, more people can be employed that will further decrease the unemployment rate of Bangladesh. Flower cultivation has emerged as a profitable business, which ensures higher potential to return, compared to other agricultural crops. According to EPB export data, the country exported cut flowers and foliage worth \$16.58m during July-November 2013, an amount that is 15.2% more than that of the export target, so this industry carries huge importance for Bangladesh (Dhaka Tribute Newspaper, 2014). Additionally, there are so many data of different studies have shown that the consumption of floral products by the people of Bangladesh has been increased noticeably. Therefore, the massive growth of this industry advocates that it is the high time for the florist business person to adopt and sincerely utilize the Floral Marketing tactics to make their business more profitable than ever.

## **7. Worldwide Scenario of Floral Marketing:**

According to Goodrich, 1980, yearly bedding foliages started to sell in the 1950s by different grocery shops to lessen seasonal surpluses of local producers. The study of Sullivan et al., 1980, stated that through various tiny florist firms, floral products were marketed at that time. At that time, trades of flower and floral items have progressively improved by the mass vendors, especially supermarkets (Behe, 1993). But now, with an average annual growth of 6% and an estimated global trade volume of more than 100 billion dollar a year, the international trade of flowers and floral products becomes a thriving industry (African Business Magazine, 2012). Before 1991, global floral consumption was more than 25 billion dollar (Behe, 1993). In 2000, The American Floral Endowment executed Consumer Tracking Study that revealed almost 67% purchase flowers for their own desire, and another 33% pay for it as a gift. Again in 2001, The Society of American Florists estimated that the floriculture industry sold almost \$19 billion in flowers, plants, and floral supplies. Today there are more than 26,200 retail florist shops only in the United States, making an average of \$250,191 in annual sales (Bizstudyportal.com, 2012). Globally the major players are alienated into manufacturers in emerging countries and consumers in developed countries. Around 50% world floral consumer market has been grabbed by four developed countries, Germany, USA, France, and UK (African Business Magazine, 2012).

The major floral consumer markets and their percentage of flower consumption are shown in the Table 1:

Table 1: Top countries in the world on the basis of flower consumption (in %)

Country	Consumption rate (in %)
Germany	22%
USA	15%
France	10%
UK	10%
Netherlands	9%
Japan	6 %
Switzerland	5%
Italy	5%

In addition, more than \$13 billion worth of cut flowers are sold annually In the U.S and The U.S. imports mainly from Colombia, a nation that sells approximately 500 million tons of flowers for only Valentine’s Day. Americans get 78 percent of their imported flowers from Colombia, followed by Ecuador and Mexico at 15 percent and 2 percent respectively. Europe, on the other hand, imports most of its flowers from Africa, with Kenya in the lead, followed by Ethiopia, Zimbabwe, South Africa, Uganda, Tanzania, and Zambia (Palet, 2014). The Netherland is entitled as the emperor of floral industry and at present they are now the global center for 60% of the world’s dealings in cut flowers. As the Dutch people use flowers as visual drugs for their eyes, thus The Netherlands also becomes one of the largest floral consumers along with the U.S., Germany, France, the U.K., and Switzerland; and at present, these four countries obtain about three-quarters of the world’s cut flowers (Grower News, 2014).

Likewise, for exporting, almost 20 countries generate noteworthy amount of cut flowers and foliages. More than 80% of the world cut flower exports have been accomplished by Holland, Colombia, Italy, and Israel with 16 other countries responsible for the remaining 20%. The top ten cut flower exporters and their proportion of world cut flower exports are: Holland (63%), Colombia (9%), Israel(7%), Italy (2%), Thailand, France, Spain, Kenya, USA, South Africa (1% each one). Other ten less remarkable Countries cover the remaining 13% (Floral Art Magazine). However, The countries those import the greatest number of floral products, are Germany, United States, France, Switzerland, Holland, Great Britain, Austria, Belgium/Luxembourg, and Sweden. The United States gets most of its imports from Colombia, while Holland gets most of its imports from Israel. Contrarily, Holland is the foremost supplying state to the remaining importing countries. Most countries produce a wide variety of flowers for domestic consumption; however, they may become better known as sources products, which they export (Floral Art Magazine and, Palet, 2014). It is thus no wonder that flowers have become one of the most profitable businesses throughout the world.

There is an indication of some of the cut floral products produced and/or sold by significant exporting countries are given below (Floral Art Magazine):

Table 2: List of top exporting countries in the world

Country	Name of the flowers exported
Holland	Roses, Carnations, Chrysanthemums, Freesia, Gerberas, Tulips, Lilies, Irises, Cymbidiums, Alstroemeria
Colombia	Carnations, Chrysanthemums, Roses
Israel	Spray Carnations, Gypsophila, Gladioli, Stalice
Italy	Carnations, Chrysanthemums
Thailand	Dendrobium, Cymbidium
France	Acacia, Eucalyptus
Spain	Carnations, Roses, Chrysanthemums, Gladioli, Birds of Paradise
Kenya	Carnations, Plumosa, Chrysanthemums, Liatris, Star of Bethlehem, Bells of Ireland, Alstroemeria
USA	Gladioli, Chrysanthemums, Roses, Carnations, Anthuriums, Orchids, Leatherleaf Fern
South Africa	Protea, Liatris, Star of Bethlehem, Chrysanthemums, Amaryllis, Carnations, Alstroemeria, Roses
Singapore	Dendrobium, Vanda, Arachnis, and Oncidium Orchids
Australia	Banksia (Protea), Cymbidium Orchids, Kangaroo Paws

### 8. Contemporary State of Floral Market of Bangladesh:

Because of the considerable demand of flower and floral products in Bangladesh, today flowers are being nurtured here greatly than before. At this time flower is being cultivated across the country in 2,500 acres of land,

mostly in Tangail, Mymensingh, Gazipur, Narayanganj, and Jessore, Kaliganj, Maheshpur, Nepa in Jenidah, Jibannagar in Chuadhanga, Savar in Dhaka and also in Manikganj, Gajipur, Bogra, Rangpur, and Chittagong. Cultivation of flower is reported to give 3-5 times and 1.5-2 times more returns than obtained from rice and vegetable cultivation, respectively. In addition, 10,000 hectares of land covers flower cultivation taking the lead by Jessore district. More than 5,000 pliant farmers are growing flowers and foliage in the country. The major flowers cultivated by the farmers are rose, tuberose, gladiolus, marigold, orchids, lily, tagor, jasmine, and chrysanthemum. (Khan, 2013; Arya, 2014; & Bizstudyportal.com, 2012)

With the increase in the global demand, the stimuli to purchase flowers have enlarged in Bangladesh. The current floral market size is Tk. 10 billion and the floral industry is growing 10% every year in this country (Bangladesh Trade and Economic Update, 2013). Every year there is a typical demand of flower in Bangladesh and the demand especially increases in some cultural ceremonies (Pahela Falgun, Valentine Day, and Borsho Boron). To fulfill the consumer demand chrysanthemum, tuberose, and gladiolus are imported from India and orchids, gerbera, anthurium and Thai rose from Thailand. For this purpose, Bangladesh spends roughly Tk. 2-3 million in importing flowers and decorative plants from overseas. Around 90% of the domestic flower industry's incomes are resulted from four varieties of flowers; roses, tuberose, marigolds and gladiolas (Arya, 2014). At present the rising popularity for orchid has been observed among flower lovers because of its adorned loveliness, colors, and prolonged existence. In Bangladesh, orchid is cultivated throughout the year and through cross breeding, various colors could be produced. Bangladesh Orchid Society at Gulshan has executed many types of marketing activities, such as arranging fair and events to popularize orchids and launch world varieties to the flower lovers (Bizstudyportal.com, 2012).

In contrast, major traders for flowers are found in Shahbag, Farmgate, and Gulshan in Dhaka. Apparently, it looks like a fair as sellers create the crowd with an extensive variety of flowers at Shahbagh traffic circle. It has grown up as a hub of flower business over the last two decades (Bizstudyportal.com, 2012). Besides some important trade zones are also found in Chittagong and other big cities. There are apparently almost 4000 retail shops of flowers in the country. 40% of the retail shops are located in Dhaka, while in Chittagong and Sylhet there are 25% stores of the total and the remaining 35% of the stores are in other districts. In Dhaka at a wholesale flower market, some 700 traders engage in florist business earning at least Tk. 12,64,000 every day. The prime motive of these traders is to fulfill the domestic demand, after that flower is being exported from Bangladesh mostly to different developed countries (Mou, 2012, Bizstudyportal.com, 2012).

Accordingly, every year Bangladesh sells a bulky amount of cut flowers and ornamental foliage via mediators in the overseas (Khan, 2013). Bangladesh started exporting cut-flowers in 1994-1995 while Tuberose was exported to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) as a trial consignment that was value of Tk.16, 000 (Islam & Rashedur, 2013). From that time, the status of Bangladesh in exporting flowers has not been developed enough. But in spite of various difficulties, the flower industry is trying to rise and Bangladesh tries to increase the amount of exportable flowers to the international market. Rose, tuberose, orchid and gerbera are among the key flowers that arranged the floral tub of Bangladesh for exports. Floral products are exported from Bangladesh to Saudi Arabia, India, Pakistan, Italy, Portugal, United States, South Korea, Philippines, Singapore, Japan, Britain, Denmark, France, and Germany (Dhaka Tribute Newspaper, 2014).

Table 3: Amount of Exports of Cut-Flowers from Bangladesh

2008-2009(July-April) (In US dollar)	2010-2011(July-April) (In US dollar)	2011-2012(July-April) (In US dollar)
32643..21	342,266.74	1,55,566.68

Source: EPBA, 2012

## 9. Marketing Mix Considerations for Floral Marketing in Bangladesh:

In Bangladesh, the marketing of flowers and floral products hasn't evolved substantially yet. Still floral business people of this country are completely unaware about the marketing strategies and don't exercise tremendous influence on source, variety, and quality of the flowers available to the Bangladeshi consumer. Based on the group discussions conducted with farmers and nursery plant owners, here flowers and potted plants are purchased, brought to distribution warehouses and through a chain then distributed to the several outlets. Because this system exposes the flowers to additional handling and the likelihood of exposure to ethylene in the warehouse and the truck, some chains arrange for flowers from producers, wholesalers, or bouquet manufacturers to be delivered directly to their stores. At this moment, bouquet producers are doing most profitable florist business by making available the products to the mass market segment at well-located places (Reid, 2005).

### 9.1 Product:

The information that has been collected from the comprehensive interviews with some successful floral traders of Dhaka Metropolitan City of the Bangladesh discloses that there are various types of flowers produced but

mostly rose, tuberose, gladiolus, marigold, orchids, lily, tagor, jasmine, chrysanthemum have demand in the market. Rose has high demand than other types of flowers. In winter the business becomes easier as the flowers remain fresh all day long and at least 35 types of flowers are available in this season. In summer types of flowers are reduced and a few items take the market lead. Bangladesh imports foreign flowers, such as chrysanthemum, tuberose, and gladiolus orchids, gerbera, anthurium and Thai rose have been imported every year. Table 4 enlightens the summarization of in-depth interviews of floral farmers and retail traders about the names of cultivated, imported, and most desirable flowers.

Table 4: Categories of Flowers

Flower cultivated in Bangladesh	Flowers that import from other country	Most demandable flower in Bangladesh
Rose, Gerbera, Lily, Crysanthemum, Anthurium, Marigold, Tagor, Orchids, Gladiolus, Jesmine, Sunflower, Tuberose, Gardenia, Krishnachura, Kath-golap, Jasmine, Sunflower.	Chrysanthemum, Tuberose, Gladiolus Orchids, Gerbera, Anthurium, and Thai rose.	Rose, Tuberose, Gladiolus, Marigold, Orchids, Lily, Chrysanthemum

### 9.2 Price:

The price of flower is so much tentative, it always moves up and down on daily, seasonally or occasionally basis by considering the supply and consumer demand of the flowers. The price of a rose can be sold in five taka in one day and it can be sold in ten taka or twenty taka on next day, affirmed by the retail floral traders. Accordingly, they follow demand based pricing in reality as the pricing decision depends on the demand and supply of the flower. The traders charge premium price when the demand of flowers high and offer very competitive price when the demand goes down. For instance, if a flower is sold at 5 taka normally but it can be sold at 15 or 20 taka in valentine day because that time demand is high. Price of the flower also goes high in strike or blockade because in that time the suppliers face transport crisis to deliver the flowers according to the market demand.

### 9.3 Promotion:

From the internet reviews and discussions with physical floral store owners and bouquet manufacturers, it is identified that they are not that much familiar with the branding and promotional approaches to offer their products. There are more than four thousand floral shops in Bangladesh but they do not follow promotional activities robustly as the size of their businesses is small. There are some online flower shops (Upoharbd, BdGift.com, Dhaka Florist, Giftz Haat, etc.) in Bangladesh which have some facebook pages and they offer online flower delivery to the customers by utilizing online advertising on their own website to induce the customers. The flower traders also adopt a minimum level of consumer promotions under sales promotion tool where they display their products and show their catalogs and sometimes offer discounted price. The retail floral traders often run signboard in their shops as a tool of advertising. These sellers of Bangladesh also use public relation strategy where they try to make a good bonding with their customers while taking and delivering the orders, especially for decorating different events by flowers, like wedding stage decoration, birthday or anniversary arrangements, etc.

### 9.4 Place:

The cut flowers in general are transported in a very traditional and disruptive way both in the local markets as well as in the distant markets. Generally, rickshaw, van, shoulder load, night coach, and truck were the frequent modes of transportation used by different intermediaries and traders. Farmers transport most of their products by using shoulder load, rickshaw, van, by-cycle etc. Truck, buses are used for moving flower from distant regions to Dhaka City. Bulky bundles of lowers of different kinds are forced to place inside the truck and these results in huge post harvest losses of flowers. The retailers at Shahbag area use rickshaw van to bring flowers to their shops. But at the time of home delivery of flowers and to furnish order various modes of transportation are used such as rental car, CNG auto, rickshaw, etc. (Mou, 2012) from the interviews, some other ways have been recognized to accessible the flowers to the end user which are shown in the following illustration (Figure 1):

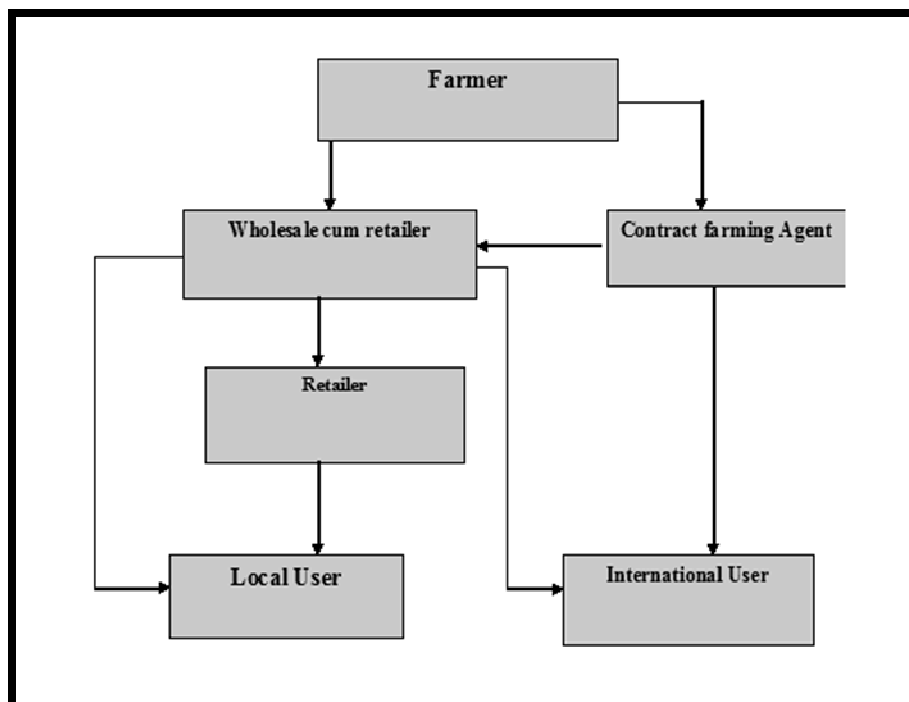


Figure 1: Different distribution channels of floral products

#### 10. Latent Scope for Floral Traders of Bangladesh:

In the present day, a flower is not only represents a representation of love but also it flourishes a profitable industry that generates revenue on top of employment (Singh, 2006). Flower is the worldwide representation of love. Hence any floral seller can broaden their scope from being in the flower business (Bizstudyportal.com, 2012). At the moment the floral industry is regarded as one of the world wide affluent industry which has attained remarkable growth rates during the past few decades. Global consumption of cut flowers is estimated at a staggering € 30 to € 40 billion per year with Europe and North America being the leading markets. Since the 1990s, production focus has been moving from the markets in the Northern hemisphere towards countries where climatic conditions are more favorable and production and labor costs are lower (Mou, 2012). As a result, the new centers of production that are emerging are typically developing countries such as Colombia, Kenya, Ecuador, and Ethiopia. Thus, it is a good chance for Bangladesh to grab the world flower market and can generate more foreign currency by exporting flower and floral items.

Furthermore, there are so many countries in the world, which are making foreign currency by exporting flowers. Kenya is a good instance of this. From the last few years, the Kenyan cut flower industry has grown hastily. It endows with vital income for up to two million poor people and it is the second largest agricultural foreign exchange earner at more than 250 million dollar per year (Ethical Trading Initiative, 2011). Like Kenya, it is an immense opportunity for Bangladeshi floral traders to generate foreign returns by exporting flowers and floral products with proper branding. Additionally, there is also considerable opportunity in both export and domestic markets for cut flowers and floral products from Bangladesh. According to the Export Promotion Bureau of Bangladesh, after fulfilling the local demands, there are significant scopes of earning foreign exchange currency by exporting flowers (Media Bangladesh.net., 2014). Today and in the near future, the potential for commercial floriculture expansion in Bangladesh, including production for domestic and export sales of cut flowers, is and will be greater than ever before. Therefore, it is easily visible that, if this industry properly nurtured, Bangladesh has tremendous potentiality to claim a better position in the global floricultural market.

#### 11. Obstacles Confronted by Farmers and Floral Traders in Bangladesh:

Though florist business carries huge opportunity to trade globally with a greater margin but it is not explored yet in Bangladesh as the floral marketing is not fully structured and utilized (Arya, 2014). It refers the flower industry has high prospects in Bangladesh but it has some dark side as well. Even though the innate quality and color of original flowers of Bangladesh is truly enthralling and more natural than the flowers of any other countries; the current situation of Bangladeshi flower producers is not beneficially evident as they had no methodical education and training on how to grow, how to manage environmental problems to cultivate flower (Arya, 2014), and lastly conserve the flowers. In Bangladesh, the flower growers or traders can't carry the

flower's permanence more than 5 days, because of the insufficiency of maintenance, germination, disease control, nurturing, and longevity of flowers (Bizstudyportal.com, 2012). As well, the farmers are constantly tormenting from the lack of mother plants and extra price of manure and insecticides. Even after providing these items to their fields, they couldn't be benefited as insects and various types of diseases cause a profound damage of their fields. Moreover, additional hindrances those confronted by our flower farmers are thefts of plants, flower ruin by animals and spoilage. To explore the floriculture business in Bangladesh, one of the major obstacles is insufficient and fragile markets. (Arya, 2014)

Likewise, the mediators also face a number of problems alike the farmers. Because of the financial sufferings, sometimes it's not easy for them to continue the business. Even in Bangladesh due to high rate of interest, they couldn't apply for institutional loan. For accelerating the floral business, it must be lowered. Even after managing these matters, it is very perilous for a farmer or trader to store the product. After harvesting to reduce the inner field heat from the flowers, the universal system is to keep the flowers in a very low temperature for a specific time and afterward flowers are wrapped by sprinkling water to preserve moisture (Arya, 2014).

Another major difficulty in the ways of getting success in floral business is the transportation and communication system, which are immeasurably weak in this industry. At this time in our country, flower and floral products are transported through very conventional and unsupportive ways that massively harms the quality of these items. Exporters also face these types of trouble in case of exporting across national boundaries. There is no slab system in Bangladesh Biman for flowers and ornamental plants though it is available for vegetables. Sometimes flowers are damaged before reaching destination as Biman often does not maintain the proper flight timetable (Dhaka Tribute Newspaper, 2014).

Apart from these core problems, the floriculture industry faces many challenges including increasing energy and input prices, seasonality of its products and international competition (Vanzile, 2009). It is also observed that, despite the minimum educational knowledge about floral marketing, today Bangladeshi retail floral traders are trying to pursue floral marketing strategies, especially floral branding initiatives, either unconsciously or subconsciously.

## **12. Necessary Recommendations:**

As the floral industry is still in its formative years in Bangladesh, there are huge possibilities for further improvement and turn into one of the profitable industries by achieving higher return (Mohiuddin, 2016). On the basis of internet reviews, existing researches, group discussions with farmers, and in-depth interviews of retail traders, the researchers of this study have found out different scopes for exploring this floral industry and floral marketing practices.

### *12.1 To Government:*

- For improving the current situation, it is mandatory for the Government of Bangladesh to organize various training programs for the farmers and the traders so that they can acquire necessary knowledge for cultivation and can fulfill the demand of both domestic and international markets (Arya, 2014).
- In addition to training facilities, other supporting facilities such as cold storage, air-conditioned vehicles for flower transports, subsidy in air cargo freight charges also need to be provided.
- Government must provide appropriate production assistance and storage facility to provide support to farmers and floral traders in marketing of the produced flowers, as this industry could play a strong role in Branding our nation across the globe by upholding the economic development (Mannan et al. 2007).
- Government also needs to provide low interest loan facility to the farmers and provide export facilities for the development of flower market.
- By our Government, marketing information needs to be available to the farmers through national mass media such as radio, television, newspaper, etc.
- To facilitate the export, Government should accommodate a safe slab system within Bangladesh Biman as well as give proper instructions to Bangladesh Biman for maintaining the flight schedule.

### *12.2 To Farmers/Flower Growers:*

- The farmers needs to take participate in different training program on preservation, germination, disease control, cultivation, and longevity of flowers in order to boost up the export (The Financial Express, 2014).
- Growers need to become skilled at to enlarge innate compounds that boost the fragrance of flowers as well as learn accurate methods of planting, tending, harvesting (Yue et al. 2009; Reid, 2005)
- Most importantly, they must work hard to make the soil more fertile for best cultivation of flowers by proper composting of soils and by providing enough time and enough space (Yue et al. 2009; Reid, 2005).



### 12.3 To intermediaries (Wholesaler/retailer/agent):

Most notably, they must provide strong support in the following parts for assisting in floral marketing activities:

- Warehousing facility
- Temperature
- Freshness

### 12.4 To the Floral Marketers:

The following structured suggestions for conducting the floral marketing practices have been found in many studies (Mou, 2012; Yue et al. 2009; Bizstudyportal.com, 2012; Vanzile, 2009; Yue & Behe, 2008; Growing for Market Online, 2013, & Grower News, 2014):

- At first, monitoring market share and customer satisfaction are the first step to awareness, but only awareness of market share does not affect changes. They need to understand the product segments, customer segments and the reasons why consumers purchased repeatedly from a specific floral retailer. Based on this, they need to amend their floral marketing efforts and to make certain growth in sales, and profits.
- Then they need to allocate a significant amount of budget to market the floral products nationally and internationally.
- Develop visually and emotionally pleasing stores, peripheral signage and in store displays. Also display distinctive cut flowers, plants, and arrangements to increase varieties. Here they need to select a prime, convenient location for their store placement so that customers can get easily access into it.
- Charge reasonable price so that floral customers can afford easily.
- In local market, low cost packaging and in International market high quality packaging ought to be developed with product care instructions. They need to provide a large selection of packaging options - easy transport ones, protective, etc. but in designer patterns and with attached symbolic meaning cards. Moreover, provide care instructions and offer environmentally friendly options.
- To accelerate inventory turnover and profit margin, branding initiatives need to be undertaken.
- Need to plan for specific programs for specific target market groups according to their specific preferences for flowers.
- Educate their staffs to promote the products very sincerely to the targeted groups and motivate them to purchase continually. Execute print, TV, internet, and billboard ads year around by adding humor to all ads, use in-store displays, and leaflets to present people gift ideas, trade flowers in sidewalk kiosks, arranges events, fairs, etc.
- To save labor and to get online orders, a website, search engine or decision tree (software like — eFlorist) are essentials to be developed. Besides, to retain customers, develop a customer database, customization facility needs to be provided that helps consumers with product selection.
- Spread information through printed in-store media, internet sites and informative employees about longevity, symbolism and meaning, variety and so on.

### 13. Final Considerations:

The entire floral industry is experiencing a transition that higher percentage of transactions of flowers in different occasions is rapidly increasing locally as well as internationally. At present, this industry has a good prospect all over the world. Bangladesh has huge opportunity to do better in this sector though it has some drawbacks. If the flower industry is explored by farmers, traders, exporters and policy makers, it can significantly contribute to our national economy by earning foreign exchange, generating employment and increasing GDP. Therefore, the Bangladesh Government should take initiative to develop this sector.

The findings of this study will be helpful in providing innovative facts to the growers as well as all kinds of floral traders. Evidently the findings should facilitate to grow significant numbers of branded floral traders in Bangladesh. However, there are few limits of this study as this research was an exploratory examination which was conducted only once during the month of October 2014-January 2015 which means the findings might change with the evaluation criteria of the participants. However, the results discussed here should be used an advice to many types of florist business people to monitor market share and take steps to augment escalation. Future researches could expand the study to Bangladeshi people in other provinces except Dhaka, and compile all of them in together. Researches should also be repeated at regular intervals to observe changes and to understand many facets of floral consumers.

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