

Market Trends, Pricing and Promotion of Ornamental Horticulture Products in India

**Swati Sharma¹,
Kiran N. Patel²**

¹Professor & Head (ABM)
ASPEE Agribusiness Management
Institute, Navsari Agricultural
University, Navsari – Gujarat

²Assistant Professor (ABM)
ASPEE Agribusiness Management
Institute, Navsari Agricultural
University, Navsari - Gujarat



*Corresponding Author
Swati Sharma*

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INTRODUCTION

Ornamental horticulture has emerged as a rapidly growing segment of the horticulture sector, focusing on the cultivation and commercialization of flowers, foliage plants, potted plants, and landscaping materials primarily valued for their aesthetic and decorative appeal. With increasing urbanization, rising disposable incomes, changing lifestyles, and growing demand for landscaping, gifting, and event decoration, the market for ornamental horticulture products has expanded significantly in recent years. Unlike conventional agricultural commodities, ornamental products are highly perishable, quality-sensitive, and demand-driven, making their marketing more complex and dynamic. Efficient marketing channels, appropriate pricing strategies, and effective promotional approaches play a crucial role in ensuring profitability and reducing post-harvest losses. However, challenges such as price volatility, inadequate infrastructure, limited market information, and dependence on intermediaries continue to affect the sector. Therefore, understanding the market structure, pricing dynamics, and promotional strategies is essential for enhancing competitiveness and sustainable growth in ornamental horticulture.

Definition of Ornamental horticulture products

Ornamental horticulture products are plants and plant materials grown mainly for decorative and aesthetic purposes rather than for food. They include cut flowers, potted plants, foliage plants, ornamental shrubs, and landscaping materials valued for their beauty, color, fragrance, and visual appeal.

Characteristics of Ornamental horticulture products

The characteristics make ornamental horticulture a highly sensitive and market-driven sector, requiring efficient supply chain management, proper infrastructure, and timely marketing to minimize losses and maximize profitability.

Ornamental horticulture products possess unique features that significantly influence their marketing and supply chain systems:

1. Perishability: Flowers and foliage have a very short shelf life and are highly sensitive to temperature, humidity, and handling conditions. Delays in harvesting, storage, or transportation can lead to rapid deterioration, making efficient post-harvest management and cold chain systems essential (Kader, 2002).

2. High Value: Ornamental crops, especially exotic and hybrid varieties, offer higher returns per unit area compared to traditional crops. However, their high-value nature also increases financial risk in case of spoilage or market fluctuations.

3. Quality Sensitivity: The market value of ornamental products depends largely on visual attributes such as color, size, shape, freshness, and uniformity. Even minor defects can significantly reduce price, making grading and standardization crucial.

4. Seasonality: Production and demand are often seasonal. Demand peaks during festivals, weddings, and cultural events, leading to price fluctuations and the need for careful production planning and timing.

5. Demand Variability: Demand is highly influenced by consumer preferences, cultural practices, income levels, and lifestyle changes. Trends such as interior decoration, gifting culture, and landscaping increase variability in demand (Chaudhary, 2019).

6. Bulkiness and Fragility: Many ornamental products, especially potted plants and delicate flowers, are bulky and prone to physical damage. This increases the need for careful packaging, handling, and transportation.

7. Product Diversity and Differentiation: A wide range of species, varieties, colors, and uses exist within ornamental horticulture. This diversity requires targeted marketing strategies for different consumer segments such as retail buyers, decorators, and exporters.

8. High Transportation and Handling Cost:

Due to perishability and fragility, specialized packaging and refrigerated transport are often required, increasing overall logistics costs.

Marketing of Ornamental horticulture products

Marketing channels in ornamental horticulture represent the pathways through which products move from producers to final consumers. These channels vary depending on the scale of production, type of product, market access, and level of organization. Efficient marketing channels are essential for reducing post-harvest losses, minimizing transaction costs, and improving the producer's share in the consumer price (Acharya & Agarwal, 2019).

The major marketing channels are as follows:

1. Direct Marketing (Producer → Consumer): Growers sell directly through farm gates, local markets, or nurseries. It offers higher profit margins and direct customer interaction but has limited market reach.

2. Traditional Marketing Channel (Producer → Wholesaler → Retailer → Consumer): The most common channel in India involving intermediaries. It ensures wider market access but reduces farmers' profit share.

3. Export Marketing Channel (Grower → Exporter → International Market → Consumer): Used for high-value products like cut flowers and exotic plants. It provides higher returns but requires strict quality standards and high investment.

4. Modern Marketing Channels (E-commerce & Digital Platforms): Includes online flower delivery, nursery websites, and social media sales. It expands customer reach and improves engagement but depends on digital skills and efficient logistics.

5. Institutional and Contract-Based Channels: Products are supplied to hotels, event managers, and corporate offices through contracts. It ensures stable demand but requires consistent quality and supply.

Market Structure of Ornamental horticulture products

The market structure of ornamental horticulture is characterized by the coexistence of organized and unorganized sectors, each playing a significant role in the distribution and sale of products. In India, traditional and unorganized markets continue to dominate domestic trade, while organized retail systems and export-oriented units are gradually expanding due to increasing demand and globalization (National Horticulture Board [NHB], 2023). It includes:

1. Unorganized Sector: Includes local flower mandis, street vendors, and small traders with informal transactions. It faces price volatility and low transparency but supports small farmers and local distribution.

2. Organized Sector: Includes supermarkets, floriculture firms, and export companies with better infrastructure, standardization, branding, and cold chain facilities, ensuring better price realization.

3. Wholesale Markets (Mandis): Major hubs for bulk flower trading where prices are set through auction or negotiation. They aid distribution but face issues like high commissions and handling losses.

4. Retail Market Segment: Includes florists, roadside vendors, and online sellers serving consumers for decoration and events, with value addition through bouquets and floral designs.

5. Export-Oriented Market: Focuses on international trade of high-value ornamental products using advanced production and cold chain systems, generating foreign exchange and promoting modernization.

Key Stakeholders in the Ornamental horticulture products

The ornamental horticulture market involves multiple stakeholders, each performing specific roles:

1. Growers and Nurseries: They are the primary producers of flowers and ornamental plants, responsible for activities such as

cultivation, harvesting, and initial grading, thereby forming the foundation of the ornamental horticulture value chain.

2. Wholesalers and Commission Agents:

They are agents act as intermediaries between producers and retailers, facilitating bulk trading of ornamental products and playing a key role in price determination within the market.

3. Retail Florists and Event Decorators: They add value to ornamental products through floral arrangements and decorative services, catering to both individual consumers and institutional clients for occasions such as weddings, events, and celebrations.

4. Exporters: They handle the international trade of ornamental products, ensuring compliance with quality standards, documentation, and efficient logistics required for successful export operations.

Pricing of Ornamental horticulture products

Pricing in ornamental horticulture is highly dynamic and complex due to the perishable nature of products, fluctuating demand, and market imperfections. Unlike staple agricultural commodities, prices of ornamental products are largely driven by quality attributes, consumer preferences, and timing of market arrival. As a result, price volatility is a common feature in this sector (Kumar & Singh, 2020).

Key Factors Influencing the pricing of Ornamental Horticulture products

1. Quality and Grading: Size, color, freshness, and uniformity determine price; better quality fetches premium prices.

2. Seasonal Demand: Prices rise during festivals, weddings, and special occasions, and fall during off-seasons.

3. Variety and Product Type: Exotic flowers like orchids and lilies usually command higher prices than traditional varieties.

4. Transportation and Logistics Costs: High transport and cold storage costs increase the final price of ornamental products.

5. Market Location and Access: Growers near urban markets often receive better prices due to lower transport costs and fresher supply.

6. Supply Fluctuations: Weather, pests, and production cycles affect supply, causing price rises or crashes.

7. Role of Intermediaries: Multiple middlemen reduce farmers' share in the final consumer price.

8. Export Demand and International Prices: Global demand and exchange rates influence domestic prices of export-oriented products.

Promotion of Ornamental Horticulture products

Challenges in Marketing of Ornamental Horticulture Products

Marketing of ornamental horticulture products is challenging due to the highly perishable, quality-sensitive, and demand-driven nature of flowers and ornamental plants. The major challenges are as follows:

1. Perishability of Products: Flowers, foliage, and ornamental plants have a very short shelf life. Without timely marketing and proper storage, quality deteriorates rapidly, leading to substantial losses.

2. Price Volatility: Prices fluctuate frequently due to seasonal demand, festivals, weddings, and supply-demand imbalances. This makes income uncertain for growers.

3. Lack of Organized Markets: A large portion of ornamental trade occurs in informal markets such as local mandis and roadside stalls, where pricing systems lack transparency and standardization.

4. Poor Cold Chain Infrastructure: Insufficient pre-cooling units, cold storage facilities, and refrigerated transportation reduce product freshness and increase spoilage.

5. High Post-Harvest Losses: Improper harvesting, grading, packaging, storage, and handling cause physical damage and quality loss, reducing marketable produce.

6. Dependence on Intermediaries: Multiple middlemen such as commission agents and wholesalers dominate the marketing chain, reducing the producer's share in the final consumer price.

7. High Transportation and Logistics Costs: Because ornamental products are fragile and perishable, specialized packaging and rapid transportation are necessary, increasing marketing costs.

8. Limited Market Information: Many growers lack timely access to information regarding market prices, demand trends, consumer preferences, and export opportunities, affecting decision-making.

9. Quality Standardization Issues: Absence of uniform grading and standard quality parameters creates inconsistency in pricing and buyer confidence.

10. Demand Uncertainty: Demand is heavily influenced by consumer preferences, fashion trends, festivals, and events, making market forecasting difficult.

11. Limited Export Readiness: Many growers face challenges in meeting international standards related to grading, packaging, phytosanitary certification, and documentation.

12. Low Digital Adoption: Small growers and nurseries often lack digital literacy and access to e-commerce platforms, limiting their ability to reach wider markets.

Key Promotion Strategies of Ornamental Horticulture products

The key promotion strategies of ornamental horticulture products are as follows:

1. Branding and Product Differentiation: Unique branding based on quality, variety, packaging, and sustainability improves market appeal and customer trust.

2. Digital Marketing and Social Media Promotion: Platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and WhatsApp Business help in product promotion, direct sales, and wider market reach.

3. Exhibitions and Flower Shows: Trade fairs and flower shows enhance brand visibility and promote new products and technologies.

4. Event-Based Marketing: Supplying flowers for weddings, festivals, and corporate events boosts demand and sales.

5. Retail Display and Visual Merchandising: Attractive display and packaging influence customer buying decisions.

6. Direct Marketing and CRM: Personalized services, subscriptions, and loyalty programs help build strong customer relationships.

7. Certification and Quality Assurance: Certifications like organic and eco-friendly

labelling improve consumer confidence, especially in export markets.

CONCLUSION

The Indian ornamental horticulture sector is a high-value and rapidly growing segment driven by urbanization and rising demand for decorative products. Efficient marketing, pricing, and promotion improve profitability, but challenges such as perishability, price volatility, poor cold chain infrastructure, and intermediary dependence remain. Strengthening organized markets, logistics, digital adoption, and institutional support can enhance competitiveness and ensure sustainable growth.