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Product strategies in export floriculture industry in Sri Lanka: Importance and application

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Floriculture is a profitable export venture which at present is characterized with poor export performance. Effective use of marketing mix strategies is the key to enhance competitiveness and sales revenue. This study was conducted to evaluate the importance of product mix elements on product sales and to analyze the effectiveness of product strategies adopted by the Sri Lankan export floriculture industry. Thirty exporters were purposively selected from the registered floriculture product exporters at Export Development Board Sri Lanka, based on their regularity in exporting for three consecutive years and interviewed through a structured questionnaire.

The results revealed that variety diversity (mean rank = 2.1), vase life (mean rank= 3.3), form of the product (mean rank = 3.5), age of the product (mean rank = 4.1), color diversity (mean rank = 4.57) and packaging (mean rank = 5.1) should be given priority in designing product strategies to increase sales ($F_r = 123.57$, $p = 0.00$). Labeling (mean rank = 6.33) and branding (mean rank = 7.2) were found as less important elements on floriculture product sales in the Sri Lankan context. Further, the results disclosed that production of high quality products ($t = 6.11$), manipulation of product assortment according to customer requirement ($t = 5.29$), adopting different packaging strategies for different destinations ($t = 1.76$), production of specific products for target markets ($t = 2.28$) were among the product strategies effectively adopted by the exporters. However, it was found that the level of product innovation ($t = -4.06$), value addition ($t = -2.28$), producing according to international floriculture labels ($t = -2.04$) and steps taken to develop Sri Lankan flower brands ($t = -9.00$) were not adequately carried out by the exporters. Since it was found that labeling and branding have less implications on increasing sales in the Sri Lankan context, product innovation and value addition should be encouraged in order to improve the sales revenue and competitiveness of Sri Lankan floriculture exports.