**Challenges in Direct Marketing of Cauliflower: A Model-Based Study from Haryana, India**

**ABSTRACT**

The present study adopted purposive sampling to select 200 cauliflower-growing farmers from the Panipat and Sonipat districts of Haryana during 2021–22. The objective was to propose a comprehensive direct marketing model by identifying the key factors hindering the adoption of direct marketing practices. The analysis revealed that farmers face several constraints, including the absence of cold storage facilities, limited market access, and intense competition in direct-to-consumer sales. Based on these findings, the study proposes a direct marketing model that emphasizes the need for supportive government policies, investment in rural infrastructure, improved market linkages, access to training and modern technology, and consumer awareness about the benefits of buying directly from local producers. The model aims to enhance farmer participation in direct marketing channels, thereby improving profitability and reducing dependency on intermediaries.

**Keywords: Direct Marketing, Marketing Model, Challenges, Market Risk**

**INTRODUCTION**

Direct marketing of specialty products refers to the process in which producers sell their goods directly to end consumers, eliminating the need for intermediaries. This single-tier marketing approach saw renewed interest starting in the mid-1970s and continuing through the 1980s. The growing national focus on direct marketing was acknowledged at the federal level and bolstered by the enactment of the Farmer-to-Consumer Direct Marketing Act of 1976, as reported by the U.S. Government Accountability Office. India benefits from diverse agro-climatic conditions and a large geographical area, making it suitable for the cultivation of a wide range of fruits and vegetables. Among these, cauliflower holds significant importance across all segments of society due to its versatility in cooking and high nutritional value. It is a staple in Indian households, often used in curries, salads, and other dishes, and plays a key role in the daily diet of millions of people. The cultivation of cauliflower is influenced by factors such as climate, soil type, and market conditions, making it essential for farmers to manage costs effectively and maximize returns. In Haryana, cauliflower cultivation spans across 28.85 thousand hectares, yielding an annual production of about 583 million tonnes. The average productivity in this region is recorded at 20.02 tonnes per hectare, according to data from the National Horticulture Board for the year 2021-22.India produced 9.4 million tonnes of cauliflower, contributing to the significant share of vegetable production in the country. Among the major states involved in cauliflower cultivation, Haryana stands out as one of the leading producers, thanks to its favorable climate and fertile soil, which create ideal conditions for growing this vegetable. The state has experienced a steady rise in cauliflower production, fueled by government support, infrastructure improvements, and advancements in farming techniques. Haryana's cauliflower production is supported by key districts like Panipat, Sonipat, Hisar, Fatehabad, and Jind, where the crop thrives due to a combination of good weather and access to irrigation. Understanding the costs and returns associated with cauliflower farming in Haryana is crucial, as it helps identify factors that affect farmers' profitability and offers insights for improving productivity and market stability in the region.

**Objective of the study**

To identify the marketing constraints of cauliflower faced by the farmers and thereof suggest the marketing model for them.

**METHODOLOGY**

Haryana grows cauliflower primarily in districts such as Panipat, Sonipat, Karnal, Yamuna Nagar, Ambala, and Gurgaon. The current research specifically targeted two districts in Haryana, namely Panipat and Sonipat, chosen purposively due to their substantial cauliflower cultivation areas. Within each selected district, two blocks – Smalkha and Panipat from Panipat district, and Rai and Sonipat from Sonipat district were purposefully selected based on having the highest cauliflower cultivation areas in their respective districts. The study utilized purposive sampling, selecting 50 cauliflower growers from each chosen block, leading to a total of 200 interviews conducted with cauliflower growers to collect the necessary information. The selection of the farmers was based on information gathered from the District Horticulture Officers of the concerned districts, specifically regarding villages and farmers who cultivate cauliflower in the selected blocks. The objective of this study is to identify the key marketing constraints encountered by cauliflower farmers and to develop a suitable marketing model that can enhance their market access and profitability.

To achieve the study's objectives, the collected data underwent statistical analysis. In addition to simple averages and percentages, a range of suitable statistical techniques were employed to fulfill the study's goals.

**RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS**

On the basis of feedback and suggestions given by the farmer, researchers have tried to suggest a comprehensive marketing model showing factors prohibiting direct marketing of cauliflower. These findings align with similar results obtained by Adanacioglu *et al*. (2016). The aim of study is to identify the direct farm marketing options, future intentions, and obstacles faced by cauliflower growers. Among the cauliflower growers, the most commonly employed approach for direct marketing was setting up roadside stands. Roadside stands and community supported agriculture emerged as the most prominently considered direct marketing strategies. It was observed that as the farm size and gross farm income increased, the average revenues generated through direct marketing also increased. The primary challenge recognized by growers was the difficulty in reaching consumers directly. The table shows that Channel - I: Producer → Wholesaler-cum-commission agent → Retailer → Consumer, Channel- II: Producer → Retailer → Consumer, Channel- III: Producer → Consumer.

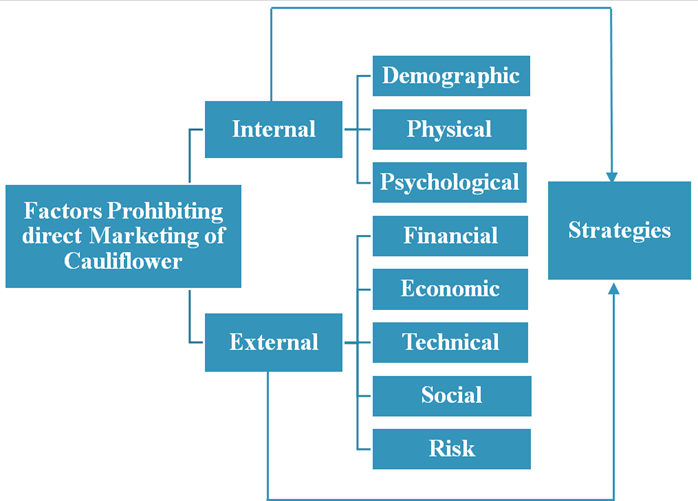
**Table1: Distribution of Cauliflower Sales Across Different Marketing Channels**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Haryana** | | | | |
| **Channel - I** | 93.51  (79.45 %) | 95.01  (76.41 %) | 90.48  (70.62 %) | 93.15  (77.00 %) |
| **Channel - II** | 14.26  (12.11 %) | 19.05  (15.32 %) | 24.71  (19.28 %) | 17.22  (14.23 %) |
| **Channel - III** | 9.90  (8.41 %) | 10.27  (8.26 %) | 12.91  (10.07 %) | 10.60  (8.76 %) |
| **Total Quantity** | 117.69  (100 %) | 124.33  (100 %) | 128.12  (100 %) | 120.97  (100 %) |

In Haryana, limited use of direct marketing indicates that farmers face significant challenges in accessing these more profitable and efficient channels. Findings from the study highlight several constraints: lack of transportation facilities, absence of organized retail spaces or farmers' markets, low bargaining power, limited market information, inadequate storage and processing infrastructure, and poor awareness of consumer demand trends. Additionally, small and marginal farmers often lack the time, capital, and networks required to establish direct connections with buyers. These barriers collectively hinder the adoption of direct marketing strategies, despite their potential to improve price realization and reduce dependency on middlemen. Therefore, there is a critical need to design and implement a farmer-friendly, inclusive marketing model that addresses these structural and logistical constraints while promoting direct linkages between producers and consumers. Such a model should integrate digital platforms, cooperative marketing structures, and government-supported infrastructure to facilitate fair, transparent, and efficient marketing for cauliflower producers in the region.

As the table indicates, Channel III (Producer → Consumer) is the least utilized marketing channel for cauliflower disposal by farmers. This highlights the need to develop a marketing model aimed at identifying the key constraints limiting the adoption of direct marketing and formulating appropriate strategies to address these challenges effectively.

**Fig1: Marketing Model: Factors Prohibiting direct marketing of Cauliflower**



1. **Internal Factors**

The internal factors Influencing the Marketing of Cauliflower are:

1. **Demographic Factors**

There are several demographic challenges that vegetable-growing farmers may face while engaging in direct selling.

1. Aging Farmer Population: Many farmers engaged in vegetable cultivation are elderly, and the younger generation often migrates to urban areas in search of better job opportunities. This demographic shift can lead to a lack of young farmers interested in continuing traditional agricultural practices, including direct selling.

2. Labour Shortage: As younger generations move away from agriculture, there is a shortage of labour available to assist with farming activities and selling vegetables door- to-door. The lack of labour can impact the efficiency of the farming process and limit the reach of door-to-door selling efforts.

3. Limited Technological Adoption: Farmers might not have access to or might not be familiar with modern technology and marketing strategies that could improve their door-to-door selling efforts. This can make it challenging for them to reach potential customers and compete with larger retailers.

4. Urbanization: As urban areas expand, the land available for agriculture might shrink due to infrastructure development and urban sprawl. This can affect the scale of vegetable farming and limit the number of farmers engaged in door-to-door selling.

5. Competition from Supermarkets and Retail Chains: The rise of supermarkets and retail chains in urban and semi-urban areas may divert customers away from purchasing vegetables through door-to-door sellers. These large retailers often offer convenience and a wide range of products, which can make it difficult for small-scale farmers to compete.

6. Transportation and Storage Challenges: Farmers may faces difficulties in transporting their produce from rural areas to urban markets and ensuring proper storage to maintain the freshness and quality of their vegetables. Lack of reliable transportation infrastructure can hinder their door-to-door selling efforts.

**Psychological Factors**

Farmers engaged in direct selling of vegetables may encounter various psychological factors that can impact their marketing efforts. Some of the key psychological challenges are:

1. Rejection and Criticism: Direct selling exposes farmers to direct feedback from customers, which can include rejection or criticism of their produce. Dealing with repeated rejection or negative comments can be emotionally challenging.

2. Self-Confidence and Self-Esteem: Farmers may struggle with self-confidence when engaging with customers and promoting their products. Doubts about their abilities and the quality of their produce can affect their self-esteem.

3. Stress and Anxiety: Direct selling can be stressful, with farmers facing uncertainty about sales, pricing, and customer reactions. The pressure to meet sales targets and navigate customer interactions can lead to increased stress and anxiety.

4. Work-Life Balance: Balancing the demands of direct selling with other farming responsibilities and personal life can be challenging. Farmers may experience difficulties in managing their time and finding a healthy work-life balance.

5. Fear of Failure: Farmers may fear failure in their marketing efforts, worrying about not meeting sales targets or not being able to effectively promote their produce. This fear can hinder their confidence and motivation.

6. Financial Insecurity: The unpredictable nature of direct selling and its impact on income can contribute to financial insecurity. The uncertainty of sales and cash flow can lead to stress and anxiety about the future.

**Physical Factors**

Farmers engaged in direct selling of vegetables encounter various physical problems that can impact their marketing efforts. Some of the key physical challenges are:

1. Long Working Hours: Direct selling often involves extended working hours, as farmers need to travel to various locations and engage with customers directly. This can lead to physical fatigue and exhaustion.

2. Outdoor Exposure: Farmers conducting direct selling are exposed to various weather conditions, such as extreme heat, cold, rain, or wind. Continuously working outdoors can impact their health and well-being.

3. Heavy Lifting and Manual Labour: Farmers need to carry and transport produce, marketing materials, and sometimes set up temporary market stalls or displays. This can involve heavy lifting and physical strain.

4. Repetitive Motion Injuries: Continuous repetitive tasks, such as packing and carrying produce, can lead to repetitive motion injuries or musculoskeletal problems over time.

5. Transportation and Travel: direct selling requires farmers to travel between locations, which can involve long hours of driving or walking, leading to physical stress.

6. Inventory Management: Farmers need to carry an appropriate amount of inventory with them during sales visits. Managing and organizing inventory throughout the day can be physically demanding.

7. Standing and Walking for Extended Periods: Farmers engaged in direct selling may need to stand and walk for long periods, leading to physical strain on their feet and legs.

8. Loading and Unloading Produce: Farmers need to load and unload produce from their vehicles during each sales visit, which can be physically challenging, especially with heavy or bulky items.

9. Setting Up Market Displays: Farmers who set up temporary market displays or stalls during direct selling need to handle physical tasks like assembling and dismantling these structures.

10. Handling Packaging and Bags: Carrying and managing packaging materials, such as bags or boxes, throughout the day can put additional physical strain on farmers.

**B) External Factors**

The external factors Influencing the Marketing of Cauliflower are:

**Economic Factors**

Vegetable-growing farmers engaged in direct selling face several economic factors that can impact their marketing efforts and overall profitability. Some of the key economic challenges are:

1. Flexible Pricing: Direct selling often involves direct negotiations with customers, leading to variable pricing based on individual preferences and bargaining power. Farmers must strike a balance between competitive pricing and maintaining profitability.

2. Transportation Costs: Direct selling requires farmers to travel to different locations, incurring transportation costs for both themselves and the produce. High transportation expenses can reduce the farmer's net income.

3. Time Investment: Direct selling demands a significant time investment, from planning sales routes to visiting customers. The time spent on marketing can reduce the time available for other farm tasks, potentially affecting overall productivity.

4. Seasonal Variations: Vegetable prices often fluctuate with seasonal availability. Farmers must adjust their pricing and marketing strategies to account for seasonal variations in demand and supply.

5. Competition with Retailers: direct selling competes with established retailers, who may offer a wider range of products and lower prices due to economies of scale. Competing on pricing can be challenging for small-size farmers.

6. Market Demand: The level of demand for vegetables in different areas can vary, impacting sales potential for direct selling. Farmers may need to target areas with higher demand to maximize sales.

7. Payment Collection: Collecting payments from customers during direct sales can be challenging, and some customers may delay or default on payments, affecting the farmer's cash flow.

8. Seasonality of Produce: Direct selling relies on fresh produce, which has a limited shelf life. Farmers must manage inventory carefully to avoid spoilage and waste.

**Financial Factors**

Vegetable farmers who sell directly to consumers may encounter various financial hurdles:

1. Marketing Costs: Direct marketing requires additional expenses for advertising, promotion, and setting up farmers' market stalls or online platforms. These marketing costs can put pressure on the farmer's budget.

2. Infrastructure and Equipment: Farmers may need to invest in infrastructure, such as refrigeration units or market stands, and equipment for packaging and transportation. These initial investments can strain their financial resources.

3. Seasonal Fluctuations: Direct marketing often involves seasonal produce, leading to fluctuations in income throughout the year. Farmers may face lean periods during off- seasons, affecting their cash flow.

4. Inventory Management: Maintaining an appropriate level of inventory to meet customer demand without experiencing excessive spoilage or waste can be financially challenging.

5. Payment Collection: Farmers selling directly to consumers may face delays in receiving payments or encounter customers who default on payments, impacting their cash flow.

6. Competition with Larger Retailers: Farmers may find it challenging to compete with larger retailers in terms of pricing and market reach, potentially impacting their sales and revenue.

7. Price Fluctuations: Setting competitive prices while ensuring profitability can be difficult, especially when market prices for vegetables fluctuate.

8. Credit and Payment Risks: Offering credit to customers or dealing with delayed payments can create financial risks for farmers.

**Social Factors**

Farmers who grow vegetables and sell them directly to customers may face different social factors that can affect their marketing efforts. Here are some of the primary social challenges:

1. Community Perception and Trust: Farmers may face initial skepticism or lack of trust from the community when engaging in direct selling. Building a positive reputation and establishing trust with potential customers can be a social hurdle.

2. Resistance from customers: Some customers may be hesitant to buy from door-to-door sellers due to concerns about the authenticity or quality of the products. Overcoming this resistance and building trust might be challenging for farmers.

3. Community Support and Competition: Farmers operating within a tight-knit community may encounter both support and competition from other local businesses. Navigating these dynamics and building collaborative relationships can be important for sustained success.

4. Social Media and Online Presence: Establishing and managing a social media presence or online platforms for direct selling can be challenging for farmers who are not familiar with digital marketing. Utilizing these tools effectively can enhance visibility and attract customers.

5. Social Support and Networking: Engaging with fellow farmers, joining local agricultural associations, or participating in farmers' markets can provide social support and networking opportunities. Sharing experiences and resources can help overcome social challenges.

6. Seasonal demand: Depending on the region and products being sold, there may be fluctuations in demand throughout the year. Farmers engaged in door-to-door selling may find it difficult to maintain a stable income during periods of low demand.

7. Limited reach and market access: Direct selling may restrict the farmer's market reach to a specific locality or neighborhood. This limitation can hinder opportunities for expanding their customer base and generating higher revenues.

8. Regulatory challenges: In some areas, local regulations or zoning laws may impose restrictions on door-to-door selling, making it difficult for farmers to conduct their sales activities.

9. Competition with established retailers: Direct selling may face competition from established retail outlets and online marketplaces, making it harder for farmers to gain a competitive edge in the market.

**Technical Factors**

When vegetable farmers sell their produce directly to customers, they may encounter various practical issues that can affect how efficiently they can market their products. Here are some of the primary practical challenges:

1. E-commerce and Online Presence: Establishing and maintaining an online presence for direct sales can be challenging for some farmers, especially those with limited technical knowledge. Creating and managing a website or an e-commerce platform can require technical expertise and ongoing updates.

2. Digital Marketing: Farmers may struggle with digital marketing techniques, such as search engine optimization (SEO), social media marketing, and online advertising. Effectively reaching and engaging with potential customers online can be a technical hurdle for some farmers.

3. Payment Processing: Implementing secure and efficient payment processing systems for online or card transactions can be complex. Farmers need to ensure that their payment methods are reliable and trustworthy for consumers.

4. Mobile Compatibility: As more consumers use mobile devices for online shopping, farmers must ensure that their websites or platforms are mobile-friendly to cater to this growing segment.

5. Tech Infrastructure: Farmers may face technical challenges related to the hardware and software infrastructure required for online sales, such as reliable internet connectivity and compatible devices.

**Risk Factors**

When farmers sell vegetables directly to customers, they might face different issues that can affect how well they sell their produce. Some of the main problems they might encounter include:

1. Market Risk: Direct marketing exposes farmers to market fluctuations and changes in consumer demand. They may face challenges if there is a sudden decrease in demand for their produce or if they cannot adapt quickly to changing consumer preferences.

2. Price Risk: Farmers selling directly to consumers may have less pricing power compared to larger retailers. Fluctuations in market prices and increased competition can affect their ability to set profitable prices for their produce.

3. Weather and Crop Risks: Farmers are vulnerable to weather-related risks, such as droughts, floods, storms, or extreme temperatures, which can damage their crops and impact their yields. Such events can lead to income loss and reduced availability of produce for direct marketing.

4. Production Risk: Variability in crop yields and quality can be a risk for farmers engaged in direct marketing. If they are unable to consistently produce sufficient quantities of high-quality produce, it may affect their reputation and customer trust.

5. Transportation and Logistics Risks: Farmers involved in direct marketing need to manage transportation and logistics independently. Delays or disruptions in the delivery of produce can affect product quality and customer satisfaction.

6. Regulatory and Compliance Risks: Direct marketing involves adherence to various regulations and compliance requirements, including labelling, licensing, and health standards. Non-compliance can lead to fines, legal issues, and negative publicity.

7. Credit and Payment Risks: Farmers may face challenges with customers who delay payments or fail to pay for their purchases. Such credit risks can impact cash flow and overall financial stability.

8. Competition Risk: As direct marketing gains popularity, competition among farmers selling directly to consumers may increase. Farmers need to differentiate themselves to stand out in a competitive market.

9. Policy and Regulatory Risk: Farmers may face bureaucratic hurdles, such as obtaining licenses or permits, to conduct door-to-door selling legally. Complex regulations can deter farmers from engaging in this marketing approach. Similar results were also documented by Dhakshana and Rajandran (2017).

**Strategies to Overcome the various Challenges in cauliflower marketing**

To tackle these challenges, it is essential to implement supportive government policies, invest in rural infrastructure, establish better market connections, provide access to training and technology, and educate consumers about the advantages of purchasing from local farmers.

Additionally, the formation of farmer cooperatives and producer groups can enhance their bargaining power and market presence. It's crucial to keep in mind that circumstances may have changed since my last update, with local developments potentially occurring. There is a consistent surplus of vegetables being produced, which makes it impractical or unprofitable for producers to directly sell their products to consumers due to the manual transportation required. Direct selling also complicates price setting, as farmers have limited information about the prices charged by other sellers. Moreover, conducting training programs to educate farmers on modern agricultural practices and marketing techniques, improving transportation and infrastructure facilities, and fostering awareness about the significance of agriculture among the younger generation are all vital strategies to address the mentioned issues.

1) Farmers, focus on selling products in areas where people are likely to be interested, like neighborhoods where people care about health or prefer local products.

2) Refine sales route planning to achieve the highest possible coverage while simultaneously minimizing time and transportation expenses in a more effective manner.

3) Highlight the exceptional quality and freshness of their produce, along with the advantages of purchasing directly from the farmer, as a strategic approach to foster trust among potential customers.

4) Farmer, consider using the internet and social media advertising to reach more people in addition to your usual methods.

5) Farmers provide a variety of vegetables to attract a broader customer base and increase sales opportunities.

6) Implement efficient payment collection methods, such as mobile payment options or online invoicing, to improve cash flow.

7) Partner with other local farmers to share transportation costs and expand product offerings.

8) Promote seasonal produce at appropriate times to capitalize on higher demand and premium pricing.

9) Utilize social media and online platforms to reach potential customers and advertise door-to-door selling activities.

10) If possible, farmers can enlist help from family members or assistants during door-to- door selling to share the physical workload.

11) Engage with fellow farmers or join local agricultural communities to connect with others who share similar experiences. Sharing challenges and seeking support can help alleviate feelings of isolation.

12) Actively participate in community events, festivals, or farmers' markets to establish a presence and connect with potential customers.

13) Collaborate with local businesses, chefs, or community organizations to create joint marketing initiatives or events that showcase locally grown produce.

14) Leverage social media platforms to promote door-to-door sales, share stories about farming practices, and engage with customers online. Seek assistance or training if needed

15) Educate customers about the benefits of locally grown produce, sustainable farming practices, and the importance of supporting local farmers.

16) Highlight social responsibility initiatives, such as supporting local schools, donating excess produce to food banks, or engaging in community service. These actions can enhance the farmer's social reputation.

**Conclusion**

These findings align with similar results obtained by Dhakshana and Rajandran (2017), Donkor *et al*. (2021) and Monson *et al* (2008). Direct marketing involves establishing a personalized connection between farmers and consumers, focusing on one-to-one relationships. This paper explores the fundamental elements and obstacles associated with direct sales. Analyzing the challenges encountered in farmer-to-consumer direct marketing is essential for implementing improvements in this approach. This research aims to identify the constraints faced by farmers and assess the factors that contribute to the complexity of direct marketing. By conducting a comprehensive literature review, numerous challenging factors affecting direct marketing are assessed. The study involved 61 farmers engaged in direct marketing of various vegetables, and the challenging factors were subject to statistical evaluation. The research findings indicated that farmers encounter challenges such as a lack of cold storage facilities and intense competition in the realm of direct selling.

Consent

As per international standards or university standards, respondents’ written consent has been collected and preserved by the author(s).

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