

Identification of Present Status and Constraints of the Flower Vendors in Two Selected Religious Areas

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Cultivation and use of flowers for religious and cultural festivals is popular in Sri Lanka. Small-scale flower vendors can be seen near temples selling fresh flowers. These huge demanded niche markets were hidden and less studied. Therefore, this study was conducted to review present status, major constraints and potentials for younger generations' involvement related to the flower-vending sector attached to "*Kiri-vehera* temple in Katharagama" and "*Maim Saman Dewalaya* in Ratnapura". The population was both registered and non-registered vendors. The sample consists registered 30 respondents from *Kiri-vehera* temple and 28 respondents from *Maha Saman Dewalaya*. Data were collected using structured questionnaire. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, correlation analysis and multiple linear regression. Study reveals that majority of the vendors are females (84.5%) with average monthly income level of Rs. 24966. Most of the respondents (87.9%) are satisfied with their profession as a flower vendor. Involvement of younger generation in the sector is 46.3%. The level of constraints faced by vendors is considerably high in both places. However, vendors at *Maha Saman Dewalaya* face relatively high level of constraints. Lack of market demand and its' fluctuation, non-availability of proper selling location/area, multiple responsibilities, lack of support from government and other related authorities, laws and regulations, policies were the most affecting constraints for the vendors in both areas. Higher competition, less social acceptance of venture, lack of ability in obtaining financial and banking resources, non-availability of proper selling location, laws, regulations and policies and lack of support by responsible parties were the most affecting barriers for potential involvement of younger generations. According to the regression analysis, the level of constraints was significantly affected by the socio-economic factors such as household size, gender of the respondent, working hours per day, stall availability, availability of other income sources and vending area.

Keywords: Constraints, Flower vendors, Present status, Religious areas, Younger generations' involvement