

Chapter 16

Understanding Inter-Relational Dynamics of Different Factors Impacting the Cymbidium Orchids-Based Economy in Sikkim, India Using DEMATAL

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ABSTRACT

Floriculture based economy is slowly increasing throughout the world. Orchids, which were once found only in the wild are now being widely cultivated and being sold in the market. In this chapter, an attempt has been made to understand the inter-relational dynamics of different factors impacting the cymbidium orchids-based economy in Sikkim, India using DEMATAL. A total of 14 factors were identified in this regard and based on expert opinion, these factors were rated and analysed using DEMATAL. The cause and effect relationship of the different factors was established in the process. It was found that policy, technology, e-commerce, floricultural parks, certification and infrastructure are the causes while cold chain, quality, pricing, promotion, market development, product development, entrepreneurs, and farming are the effects.

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INTRODUCTION

Sikkim is distinct in being the second smallest state of India having a population marginally above 0.6 million. It is spread over an area of about 7096 Sq.Km. It has other unique distinctions - most important being, its proximity to both, the Tibetan Plateau in the north and the Bay of Bengal in the south. This manifests in a wide array of climatic conditions - from tropical moist forests in the south and cold desert in the north within a short distance of fewer than 100 kilometres. It harbours wholly a mountainous terrain and as a unit of eastern Himalayas, it is one of the top ten biodiversity hotspots all over the world. One important feature of its biodiversity are its splendid orchids. As many as 523 species of orchids (Including Cymbidium) are found in here. Sikkim possibly has the highest orchid's diversity ratio (Sudhizong Lucksom, 2007)

Sikkim traditionally has been an economically an underdeveloped region of the country. The twin challenge of economic under-development and fragile ecological status makes disruptive innovations in terms of economic choices vital for this tiny state. Most traditional economic sectors hardly make any sense in the context of this state. As it is exceptionally biodiverse as well as ecologically exceptionally fragile, it, therefore, does not permit any economic activity that can have even remotely severe ecological consequences. This results in very few options in terms of economic development. One of the core objectives of the State Industrial Policy is *maintenance of the Green State image while promoting industrial activities*. Cymbidiums are natural to this region and can be grown to add to the ecological richness rather than depleting it. This makes Cymbidium an attractive choice for economic development. Accordingly, in the year 2013 floriculture has been designated as an important economic sector for the state. Sikkim, consequently, has been declared a floriculture zone by the government of India. The growth in Floriculture Industry in Sikkim Himalayas is estimated to grow to 20% per annum by the year 2020. About 5,000 farmers are engaged in growing cymbidium in the state but considering the high growth of market space, more are expected to join. These opportunities, though welcome, yet may bring little cheer to the local economy as the accruing advantages at best are moderate. The approaches discussed so far are piece-meal. Jha A et al. (2018) have focussed upon the life-style segmentation of cymbidium consumers. S. Bibet et al. (2015) have studied Need assessment, Pricing and Availability perceptions of Sikkim Cymbidium. P. Kumar et al. (2018) have studied the feasibility of producing Cymbidium in Sikkim. Janakiram, T (2018) have focused upon flourientrepreneurship in the context of women empowerment and also in the context of Cymbidium.

What is needed, however, is to provide an entirely a revolutionary changeover to the traditional approach. A disruptive approach to the existing set-up is needed to meet the ecological and economic needs of the state. It, for example is found that most locally grown products are being sold locally, relatively at low prices. Very high values are possible if the product is sold internationally. This, however, is unthinkable now, primarily because of various reasons, one being that the state has poor connection with large markets.

In order to come up with a new economic vision in the context cymbidiums of Sikkim, it is imperative that a thorough analysis of macro environment of Sikkim Cymbidium is undertaken and which alone can help us to come up with an innovative approach that will help the state to harvest best of this opportunity. The aim of this study is to develop a conceptual system for developing better understanding of the macro environment and accordingly this study, therefore, is directed to understand the relationship between various macro-factors influencing the profitability of this sector in the state.

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