

Title Consumer acceptability in flower chains: how can we determine what the final customers really want?

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Abstract

When we look at the ornamental supply chain in the Netherlands as a Value Chain (Porter, 1998) it strikes us that most actors in the chain are obsessed by the product and have no idea how the value of these products is developed throughout the entire production and supply chain. Any value chain starts with the value a group of consumers attributes to the product. So it all starts with finding out what consumers want and then finding the most cost effective way of delivering that product with the desired attributes to these consumers. In the USA the South American producers expected to be able to compete with the local production by offering the product (cut flowers) at a lower price (Reid, 2002). In the first instance this worked very well and the local production virtually disappeared. However the quality of the imported product was a dismal failure and while imports surged, total flower consumption plummeted in the 90s. In the UK the retail chains such as Sainsbury's and Tesco wanted to improve their ornamental categories. They invented the 'Vase Life Guarantee' and improved their quality considerably. This resulted in an increase in market share from 18 to 60% over 15 years, while the total flower consumption in the UK doubled in the past 15 years. A research will be shown on the response of stakeholders in the ornamental industry and consumers on the question whether they would see the 'Vase Life Guarantee' as a value addition in the supply chain. This research was done in the UK and the Netherlands (where no vase life guarantee was used explicitly in the retail) at the turn of the millennium. It clearly shows the difference between the judgements of the stakeholders versus the opinions of the consumers. If we want to create Value Added Chains in the ornamental industry it is about time to find out what the consumer really wants!