

LAHORE FLOWER SPOT: TRANSITION TO DIGITAL EMINANCE

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INTRODUCTION

Dawood Amjad, a recent business graduate from the University of Central Punjab, is poised to embark on his professional journey by joining his father's esteemed business, Lahore Flower Spot. This well-established flower shop is renowned for its exquisite floral arrangements, fresh flower selections, and exceptional event management services. The patriarch of the enterprise, Amjad Ali, boasts a wealth of expertise in the floral industry, having accumulated over a decade of hands-on experience in cultivation and sales. In 2008, he founded Lahore Flower Spot, laying the foundation for a business that has since become synonymous with quality and sophistication in the floral market. As Dawood steps into this family legacy, he brings a fresh perspective infused with the latest business insights from his academic pursuits. With a commitment to maintaining the high standards set by his father, Dawood is poised to contribute to the continued success and growth of Lahore Flower Spot. The fusion of traditional expertise and contemporary business acumen positions the business for sustained excellence in the dynamic floral industry.

Having previously completed multiple internships in the realm of digital marketing, Dawood opted to forego a conventional 9:00 to 5:00 job and instead decided to join his father's business. The initial week presented formidable challenges, primarily stemming from the conventional and non-modernized operating system employed by Lahore Flower Spot (LFS). Dawood observed that neighboring shops enjoyed a relatively higher volume of business than LFS. In response to this observation, Dawood committed himself to the task of identifying the reasons behind the disparity and implementing strategic improvements. His objective is to enhance the operational efficiency and overall performance of Lahore Flower Spot, aligning it with contemporary business practices and ensuring its competitiveness in the market.

Operating System of LFS

Upon Dawood's induction into the business, he encountered a predominantly manual operational setup. The cashier relied on a manual billing system, complemented by the use of an antiquated and weathered cash register. Notably absent from the business infrastructure was an inventory management system, reflective of his father's traditional business mindset. While these operational methods didn't deter Dawood, the conspicuous absence of a digital presence in the modern landscape of 2020 left a significant impression. The absence of a digital footprint—no presence on social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram, coupled with the lack of a dedicated website for online orders—struck a chord with Dawood. This realization was disheartening for him, especially considering his understanding of contemporary market dynamics, where the majority of businesses have evolved and expanded through online existence.

Market Analysis

Upon commencing his analysis of neighboring businesses within the Liberty Flower Market, where over 10 flower shops operate, Dawood discerned a common trend. Notably,

each of these businesses maintained an active social media presence. Furthermore, approximately four of these establishments had taken the initiative to establish dedicated websites, strategically tapping into the online market. As Dawood meticulously examined these findings, it became evident that the absence of a digital presence was a noend factor contributing to their business lagging behind in comparison to others. This observation strengthened his conviction about the significance of embracing modern marketing strategies, emphasizing the need for a robust online presence to remain competitive in the contemporary market landscape.

Please find the daily sales data of 5 shops from Liberty Flower Market, referred data highlights the significant disparity in online sales among the shops, with Shop 4 recording the highest percentage of online sales at 72%, while Lahore Flower Spot (Shop 5) currently does not have any online sales. This information underscores the potential for LFS to enhance its market reach by incorporating and optimizing online sales channels in line with the observed trends in neighboring businesses (Table 1).

Shop Number	Total Daily Sales	Online Sales	%age of Online Sale
1	52000	20000	38.46
2	49200	24000	48.78
3	50500	28000	55.44
4	50000	36000	72
5 (LFS)	32000	0	0

Now that Dawood understood the main obstacle holding back their business success it was time to present his findings to his father. On the same day, armed with evidence such as sales reports and a survey of competitors' online presence, Dawood initiated a detailed discussion with his father, Amjad.

Amjad, rooted in traditional business principles, initially resisted Dawood's proposition. He held the belief that a business could thrive solely on hard work, with one person managing all aspects—himself, in this case. However, after persistent and convincing efforts from Dawood, he finally succeeded in obtaining permission for the establishment of an online presence. The appeal lay in the cost-effectiveness and the fact that it wouldn't demand additional manpower, with Dawood undertaking sole management responsibilities. The initial steps toward establishing a social media presence were undertaken with the creation of official handles on Instagram and Facebook, bearing the name "*@LahoreFlorist*." A series of preliminary posts have been shared, and visual representations are provided in the accompanying screenshots below for reference.

In the dynamic landscape of social media, the pages quickly attracted attention. Utilizing Dawood's expertise, captivating captions and thoughtfully chosen hashtags were deployed to amplify visibility and broaden the audience reach. Recognizing the significance of appealing to both Millennials and Gen Z, the adept use of engaging captions and hashtags was implemented, exemplified by the illustrative Example on the side as well. Furthermore, Dawood implemented a systematic approach by assigning a unique serial number to each post. This strategic measure was intended to facilitate clients and customers in making specific online inquiries. Instead of sending a post or screenshot, individuals can now easily reference the details by citing the assigned serial number, providing a more streamlined and convenient process. Utilizing the assigned serial numbers as a reference, an Excel sheet was meticulously crafted, outlining the details of each order in accordance with its corresponding serial number. The creation of this document serves the dual purpose of establishing a comprehensive order history and providing a clear and accessible reference for shop workers, particularly in

Dawood's absence. A prototype of this organized record is appended for your reference. Within a week of establishing the Instagram profile, Dawood successfully secured the first order, marking the commencement of a consistent influx of orders thereafter. His adept management of social media, coupled with exceptional communication skills, played a pivotal role in ensuring the smooth execution of these operations. To maintain transparency and keep clientele informed, regular updates on orders and ongoing work were systematically shared through Instagram stories. Feedback was also a part of regular stories.

The graph is a visual representation above illustrates the sales trajectory following the activation of social media profiles in February 2020. Noteworthy is the gradual yet significant upswing in sales, attributed to the incorporation of online orders. It is essential to correlate this sales chart with the broader context of Liberty Flower Market, where the observed increase represents a percentage augmentation in daily sales derived from online orders. This ongoing trend persisted for four months, demanding Dawood's full-time dedication to managing the burgeoning operations independently. Upon presenting a comprehensive graphical report to his father, Amjad expressed satisfaction with the achieved results (Figure 1).

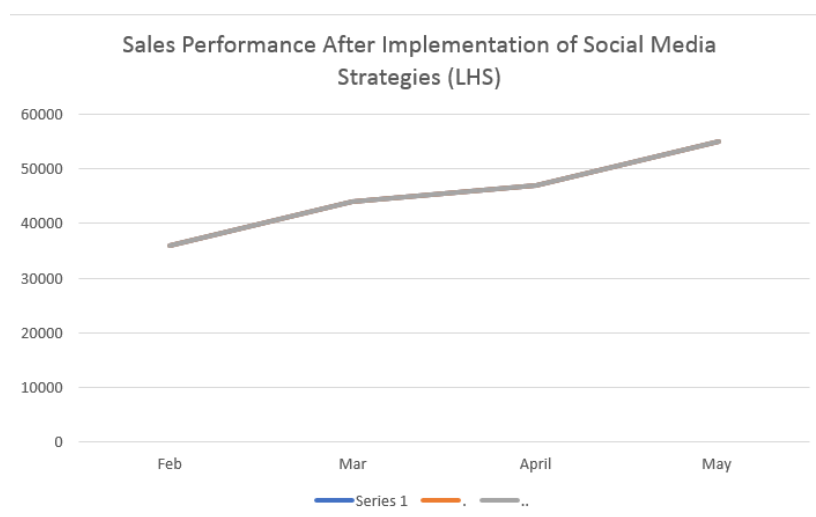


FIGURE 1
GRAPHICAL REPRESENTATION OF SALES

The subsequent strategic initiative in Dawood's agenda involved the establishment of a dedicated website for the flower shop. This endeavor, however, necessitated a substantial investment covering registration, setup, continuous maintenance, and the establishment of a 24/7 support team, including delivery personnel and suitable vehicles. Dawood proposed a budget amounting to 2.4 hundred thousand for this expansion. Despite the positive sales outcomes, Amjad remained reserved, expressing dissatisfaction and reservations regarding the sales performance's readiness to justify such a significant investment.

Faced with disappointment from the initial response, Dawood strategized an alternative approach. He recommended the recruitment of a full-time social media handler to sustain the established online presence seamlessly. This adjustment aimed to liberate Dawood's bandwidth, facilitating a dedicated focus on refining operational processes. Subsequently, his father concurred, and an intern was hired to oversee social media activities. Dawood sought to implement reforms in the following domains:

Cash Register

As previously mentioned, Lahore Flower Spot (LFS) employs a traditional manual cash register and record-keeping system. Dawood implemented an Excel format in conjunction with a computerized billing system to modernize and streamline the cash handling process. Additionally, a backend system was established for daily sales analysis.

Inventory Management

Dawood devised a system by creating a printed list, prominently displayed on the wall, instructing everyone to mark the usage of any product. This initiative aimed at enhancing inventory record-keeping. The initial phase involved manual recording of inventory usage, with the eventual plan to transition to a computerized system once the workforce became accustomed to the manual process.

Packaging

The logo of Lahore Flower Spot (LFS) was incorporated onto packaging materials, including ribbons, as a strategic measure to enhance marketing efforts and fortify the brand's visibility. This not only contributes to an improved online presence but also directly associates product updates with the company's identity.

These initiatives significantly contributed to the augmentation of sales and the establishment of the brand, expanding Lahore Flower Spot's recognition within a new clientele demographic.

Second Initiative

Despite the evident success of Dawood's previous business reforms, particularly in the realm of website development, his father remains hesitant to invest a substantial amount in this endeavor. Amjad, based on his experience, continues to favor conventional methods of selling. Dawood enjoys the professional companionship of Abdul-Hannan, a proficient web developer with expertise in the field. According to Hannan's estimations, the development and registration of the website will be facilitated through WordPress, incurring an approximate cost of 1.5 Lacs. In addition to website development, operational activities necessitate the engagement of a 24/7 operational manager, delivery personnel, and additional workforce at the physical shop. This comprehensive operational setup will entail an additional expenditure of 2 Lacs to initiate. In summary, an overall investment ranging from 3.5 to 4 Lacs is required to establish and effectively operate the website. Amjad, being a traditional businessman, expressed disapproval of the presented approximations, demonstrating skepticism towards online ventures. Dawood, faced with this rejection, experienced a significant setback, leaving him devastated and disheartened. In response, he decided to halt the initiative for a month, maintaining the status quo while actively participating in social media. Concurrently, he engaged in research to explore alternative approaches for the website, seeking a viable path forward. Dawood explored the concept of mergers and business partnerships, stumbling upon Giftoo.pk through a contact. Although Giftoo.pk was operational, they sourced their supplies and packaging from various shops. Upon approaching them, Dawood faced immediate rejection due to his perceived lack of experience and insight. Determined, he persuaded his father to advocate for their involvement as suppliers to the website. A meeting was arranged between Amjad and the site owners, resulting in a successful negotiation. Amjad effectively convinced them, and a mutually agreeable arrangement was reached: Lahore Flower Spot would become the exclusive supplier for Giftoo.pk. In exchange for each order provided to Giftoo.pk, Lahore Flower Spot

would charge a 5 percent fee on their costs. Additionally, Giftoo.pk agreed to acknowledge Lahore Flower Spot on their official website as the sole supplier, solidifying the newly established business partnership. The implementation of this arrangement was swift, leading to a rapid surge in Lahore Flower Spot's business. Witnessing the substantial growth, Dawood's father, filled with pride, began to embrace the concept of business modernization.

Future Recommendations

Dawood envisions strategic initiatives to elevate the business, encompassing:

Elevated Packaging Experience

Implement a refined packaging strategy by incorporating the shop's logos and name on ribbons, boxes, shopping bags, and accompanying greeting cards. This personalized touch enhances brand visibility and fosters a memorable customer experience.

Comprehensive Computerization

Undertake a comprehensive computerization initiative to modernize all manual and conventional business processes. This includes the integration of advanced software solutions for inventory management, order processing, and billing. The objective is to streamline operations, reduce errors, and enhance overall efficiency.

Workforce Training Program

Institute a robust training program to equip the workforce with the necessary skills to adeptly navigate and utilize the computerized inventory and billing system. This training ensures a smooth transition from manual practices to a technologically advanced operational framework.

Diversification into Catering and Event Arrangements

Pave the way for business expansion by venturing into the realms of catering and event arrangements. This strategic diversification allows the flower shop to offer comprehensive services for special occasions. Whether it's floral arrangements for events or catering services, this expansion broadens the business's scope and attracts a diverse clientele.

These forward-thinking plans underscore Dawood's commitment to innovation, efficiency, and diversification, positioning the business for sustained growth in the dynamic market landscape.

CONCLUSION

Dawood, driven by a strategic vision for business growth, has adeptly steered Lahore Flower Spot into a new era of success through a fusion of tradition and modernization. Initiatives began with a website partnership and an impactful presence on social media platforms, including Instagram, Snapchat, and Facebook, effectively expanding the business's reach. Overcoming challenges, Dawood orchestrated a pivotal collaboration with Giftoo.pk, marking a significant milestone in the journey. Looking forward, the business is poised for continued expansion with recommendations encompassing an enriched online presence, digital marketing strategies, and sustained social media engagement. Dawood's foresight extends to future plans, including the introduction of personalized packaging, comprehensive computerization of business processes, and a dedicated workforce training program. Moreover,

his vision includes diversifying into catering and event arrangements, positioning Lahore Flower Spot as a multifaceted enterprise. These concerted efforts underscore Dawood's commitment to innovation, efficiency, and sustained growth within the dynamic landscape of the floral industry.

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