



Consumer Preferences for Flowers as Gifts: Age Segments, Substitutes and Perceived Risk – Longevity and Fragrance

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BACKGROUND

When purchasing gifts, gift givers observe, rate and trade-off different gift attributes. Being aware of key attributes affecting purchasing decisions is important because a company can highlight those attributes when launching an advertising campaign. In this report, attributes are defined as product characteristics that will influence the purchase but may not lead to a sale solely by themselves. Attributes investigated included longevity and fragrance. By knowing which of these attributes are the most important to the consumer, the floral industry can highlight different attributes to attract more customers.

METHODOLOGY

To determine important floral gift attributes to givers, they were asked to complete a questionnaire and participate in a focus group discussion regarding their perceptions on floral gift fragrance and floral gift longevity.

RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

The questionnaire was administered during April 2009 in Minnesota and June 2009 in Michigan. There were 109 respondents in Minnesota and 117 in Michigan for a total of 226 participants.

To gain deeper insight into different age segments, participants were divided into three groups. The “younger group” consisted of 18-30 year olds, the “middle group” 31-40 year olds, and the “older group” 41-50 year olds. By creating concise age groups, more detailed differences were discovered among the groups.

When asked about fragrance and longevity, the younger group strongly preferred fragrance, followed by longevity, and then both (Figure 1). The middle group preferred longevity the most, then fragrance, closely followed by both. The older group also wanted longevity the most, followed by both, then fragrance alone. Overall, participants were opposed to using artificial fragrance oil to enhance the smell because they do not think fragrance oils’ scents are consistent with the actual flowers’ fragrances. Participants were more receptive of using a natural compound to enhance the fragrance (Figure 2). Focus group participants felt that having a knowledgeable staff that can direct customers towards long lasting and/or fragrant blooms is a positive.

Figure 1. Givers preferences for fragrance, longevity, both or neither
(Higher value= greater preference)

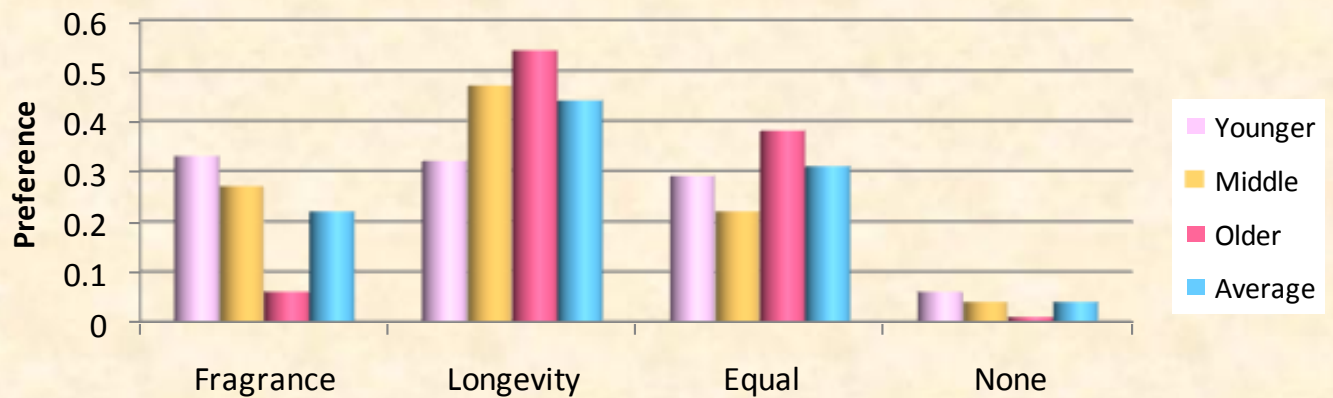
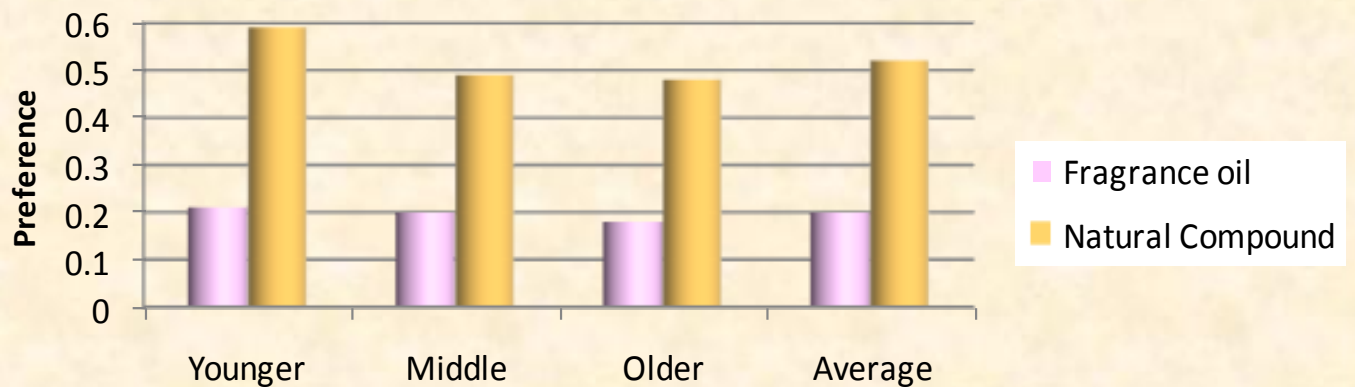
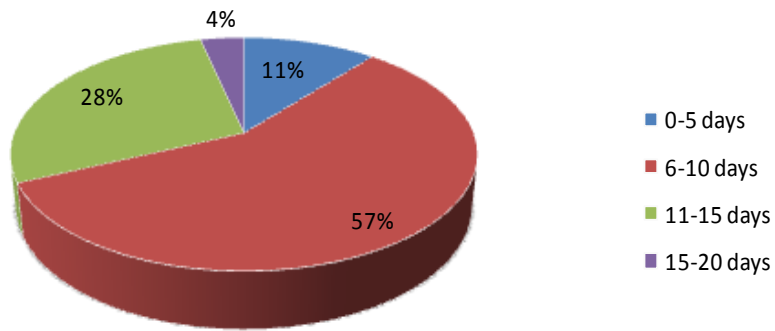


Figure 2. Different age groups receptiveness to different fragrance additives
(Higher value=greater preference)

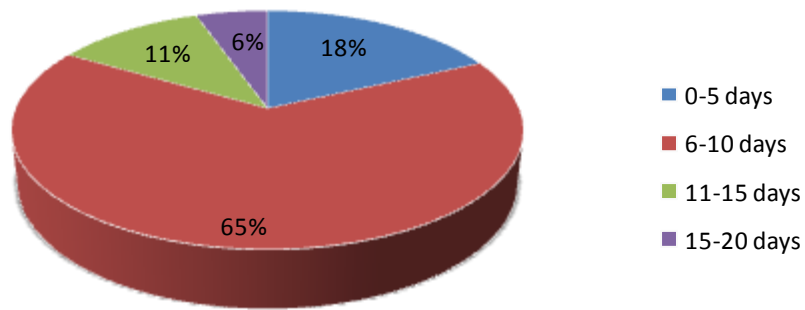


Since longevity was important to all consumers, participants were also asked about acceptable cut flower longevity. The majority of all three groups felt floral gifts should last between 6-10 days (Figure 3 - 5). The younger group had the largest percentage of people (32%) who wanted the floral gift to last 11-20 days (Figure 3). Conversely, in the middle and older group only 17% wanted the flowers to last 11-20 days (Figures 4 and 5). These results indicate that middle and older group participants were more familiar with cut flowers and their longevity than the younger group. However, it also indicated that the younger group wanted greater longevity. On average, participants felt they would be satisfied if their cut flower arrangements lasted 8.4 days. By meeting these longevity expectations, more customers will be satisfied and be confident in giving floral gifts.

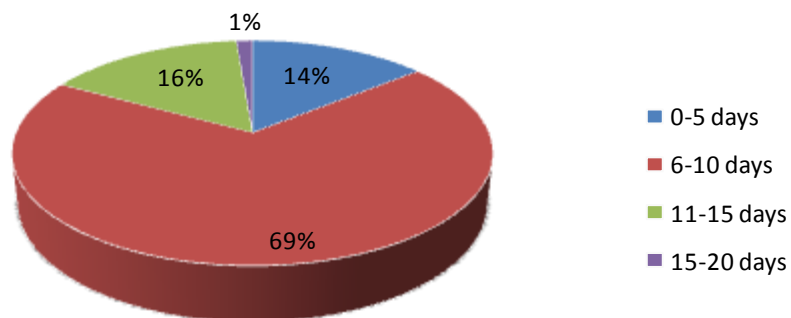
**Figure 3. Perceived reasonable vase life for cut flowers--
Younger group**



**Figure 4. Perceived reasonable vase life for cut flowers--
Middle group**



**Figure 5. Perceived reasonable vase life for cut flowers--
Older group**



RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE INDUSTRY

The floral industry can improve customer satisfaction and loyalty by focusing on these important attributes. Having knowledgeable staff, as well as developing a search engine or offering decision tree software to help consumers select their gift with their preferred attributes would accentuate the shopping experience greatly for all age groups.

Focus group participants wanted more fragrant flowers because fragrance adds value to the gift. Participants suggested designating a fragrant flower section in the store to improve ease of selection. Similarly, they want promotions and cards indicating which flowers are fragrant.

Participants also felt having information on which fragrant flowers enhance meal experiences (similar to wine pairings) would be beneficial. For participants who were more cautious with fragrance, they wanted low allergen labels on the flowers that were less allergenic.

Focus group participants wanted to know more about longevity. They are amazed by how well florists are taking care of flowers and they want to know the tricks. By giving them longevity instructions they could take care of the flowers at home like florists do in their shops.

Similarly, within the store a longevity chart that indicates how long different types of flowers last would decrease consumers' post purchase disappointment. Participants felt sorting flowers by expected longevity within the stores would improve their ease of purchase.

Focus group participants were also fans of guarantees because guarantees indicate that the florist stands behind his/her products. Lastly, to improve overall gift longevity, floral gifts could be paired with other long lasting gifts.

By aiding customers' and improving their satisfaction by enhancing fragrance and longevity, more customers will be satisfied with their purchases and utilize floral gifts.

Overall, this research will significantly assist the floral consumer by improving floral attributes and floral gift acceptability in the future.

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