

## **Consumer Preferences for Flowers as Gifts: Age Segments, Substitutes and Perceived Risk – Floral Gift Benefits**

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### **BACKGROUND**

Gift exchange is very important to the floral industry. However, many gift exchangers desire practical gifts and floral gifts are not always perceived as practical. As a result, they are not as attractive as other gift options.

One way to improve floral gift practicality is through promoting floral gift benefits. Consumer awareness and the impact of these benefits on purchasing decisions were explored in this study. The benefits used were adapted from the findings by Haviland-Jones et. al (2005) and Aboutflowers.com (2007). The benefits are: Flowers, as gifts, always elicit a true smile from women; flowers feed compassion; flowers chase away anxieties, decrease worries and the blues; flowers boost energy and elevate enthusiasm; flowers promote happiness; and flowers improve memory.

### **METHODOLOGY**

To determine consumer reactions to the floral gift benefits, they were asked first about their awareness of each of the benefits and, second, how much each of the benefits impacted their preferences for receiving flowers.

This study utilized a questionnaire where participants were asked to check if they were aware (= 1.0) or unaware (= 0) of the benefit. Participants were then asked how much the floral benefits would improve their preferences for receiving flowers. To determine how credible they perceived each benefit, half of the participants were not given the source of the benefit information and the other half was given the source. Participants were also asked to participate in a focus group where their thoughts on benefits were further explored.

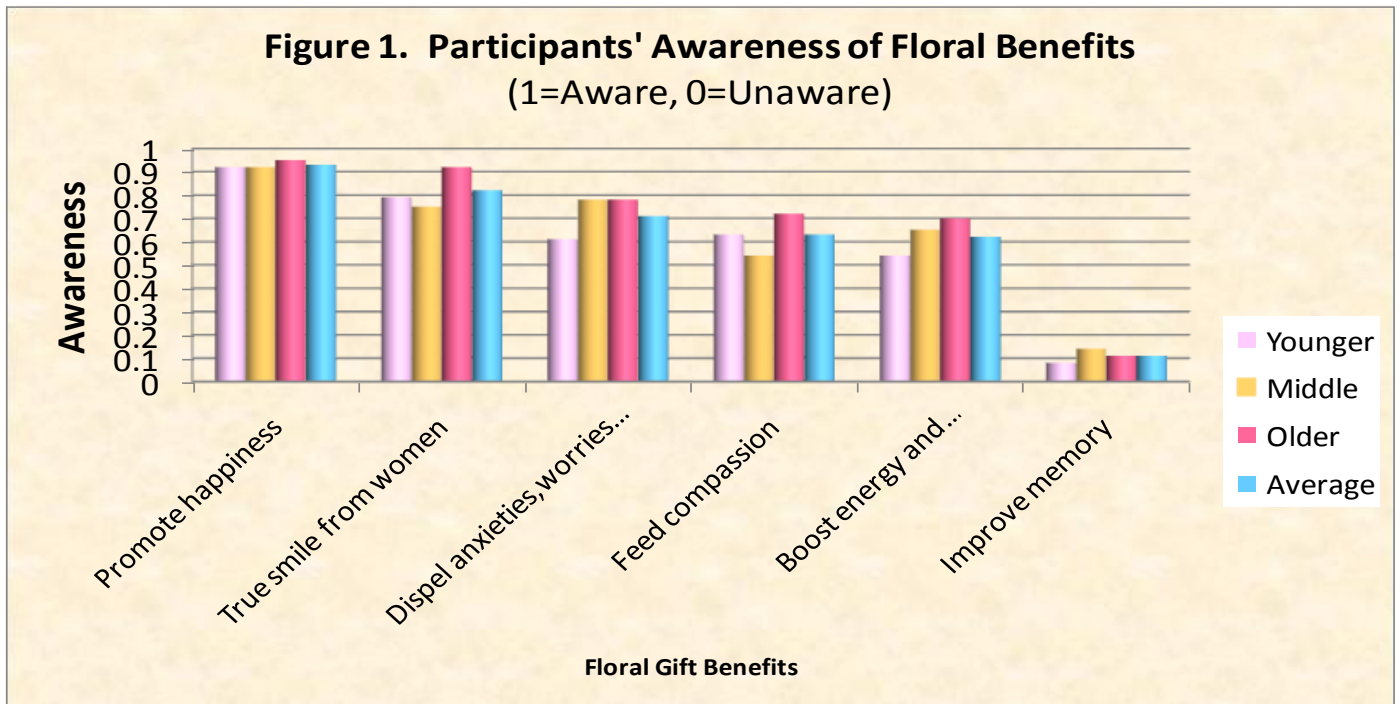
### **RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS**

The questionnaire was administered during March 2010 in Texas and April/May 2010 in Minnesota. There were 118 respondents in Texas and 95 in Minnesota for a total of 213 participants.

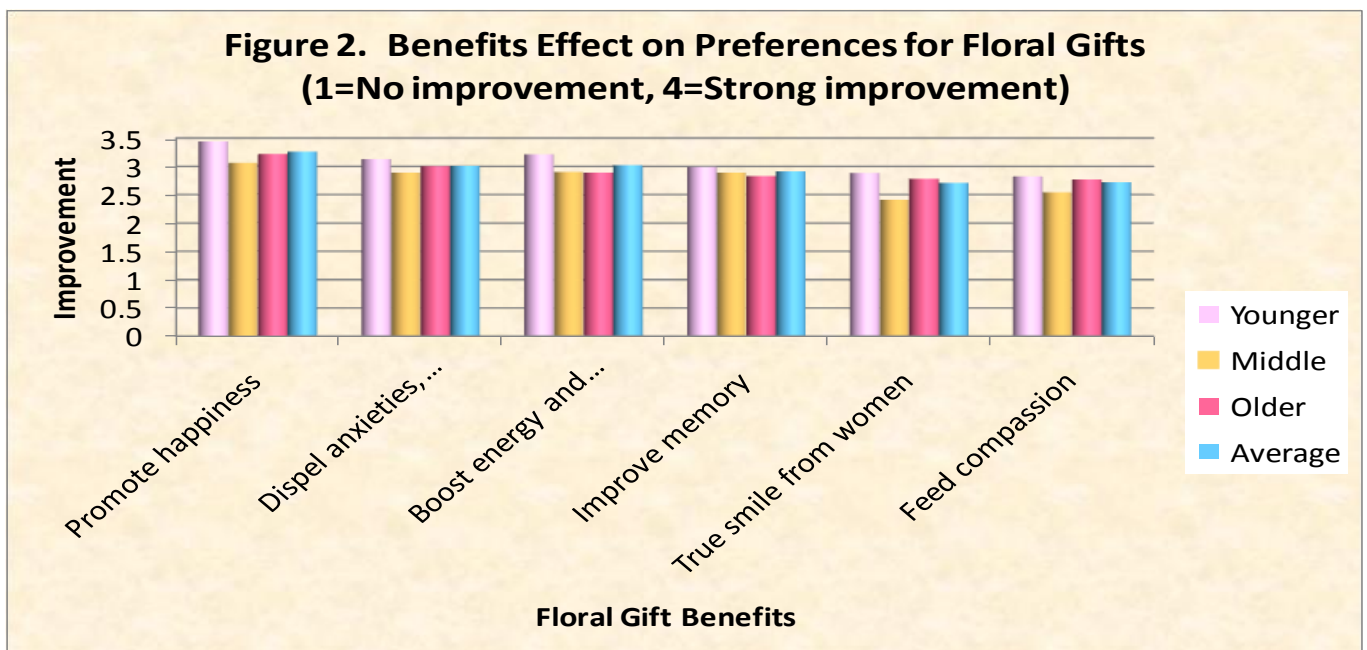
To gain deeper insight into different age segments, participants were divided into three groups. The “younger group” consisted of 18-30 year olds, the “middle group” 31-40 year olds, and the “older group” 41-50 year olds. By creating concise age groups, more detailed differences were discovered among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

On average for all participants, the fact that flowers promote happiness was the most well known benefit, followed by eliciting a true smile from women, dispelling worries, anxieties and the blues, feeding compassion, and boosting energy and enthusiasm. The fact that flowers improve memory was the least well known benefit (Figure 1). On average, the younger group was the least aware of all benefits. Supporting these findings, the focus group discussions found that the younger and middle

groups thought the benefits were *interesting, surprising* and *educational*. The older group felt the benefits were a *good reminder* indicating they knew the information but had forgotten it over time.



When asked if the benefits would improve their preferences for floral gifts, on average flowers promote happiness had the greatest effect, followed by dispelling anxieties, worries and blues, promoting energy and enthusiasm, improving memory, eliciting a true smile from women, and feeding compassion (Figure 2). In general, the younger group showed a higher probability of their preferences being improved through knowing these benefits than the middle and older age groups, indicating that the market potential of flowers can be increased among younger consumers by promoting these benefits through educational programs.



The selection and choice of the most beneficial outlets to promote these benefits and the way to phrase these benefits is very important. When the source of the benefit information was not mentioned, many participants questioned its credibility; whereas when the source was given, participants did not question the credibility. Furthermore, written, radio and billboard ads were considered more credible than TV commercials. Association-sponsored ads were also more credible than individual florists' ads due to less perceived conflicts of interest.

## RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE INDUSTRY

Through aggressive promotion of floral gift benefits (through appropriate advertising channels), there is potential to improve consumer preferences for floral gifts by improving perceived gift practicality.

Several ideas suggested during focus groups included partnering with other mutually benefitted industries (wellness clubs, gyms, etc.) to promote the benefits. Participants also felt signage in florists/partnered industries, printed articles, and billboards would improve awareness. Radio talk shows were another option that participants felt had potential. Association sponsorship and sources need to be listed to improve credibility of the advertisements.

Floral gifts could also be promoted as *every day* gifts. One suggestion for an informative everyday campaign was 'Got flowers? You deserve the beauty of the day!' - Where the focus is to generate overall consumer awareness of different benefits.

To further promote the benefits and gift personalization, the floral industry can also design cards to go with the gift so the recipient is aware of the benefit the giver had in mind for him/her.

Overall, this research will significantly assist the floral consumer by improving benefit awareness and floral gift practicality in the future.

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