

Consumer Preferences
for
CUT ROSES,
CARNATIONS,
CHRYSANTHEMUMS

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CONSUMER PREFERENCES FOR CUT ROSES, CARNATIONS, AND CHRYSANTHEMUMS

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In a project which was designed to determine the market for small inexpensive units of cut flowers as well as for small potted flowering plants in super markets it has been found that both carnations and cut chrysanthemums sell more readily than do roses. Before going into exhaustive tests to determine effects of various methods of offering and pricing of cut roses on their sales it was thought desirable to find out something about consumer preferences for roses as related to carnations and cut chrysanthemums. For this purpose a consumer panel which had been formed a few years ago as representative of the population of Columbus, Ohio, was used.

Matched samples of cut chrysanthemums, carnations, and roses were given each panel member. Half got red roses and half got yellow roses along with the chrysanthemums (yellow and white combination) and carnations (red and white combination). Preferences were obtained from the female household heads. In each instance this person was asked her preference as the flowers were handed her and then after having the flowers for five days she recorded preferences in light of five days' use of the flowers. These two preferences are both important in the sale of such units of flowers for everyday use. Being largely an impulse sale (at least until the purchasers have formed the habit of buying them through such outlets) the first impression gained from the flowers is important. Then for repeat sales it is important to know how the flowers compare in the consumer mind after several days in the home. The five day interval was selected arbitrarily as giving time in the home for this comparison. One hundred twenty samples were delivered and usable questionnaires were obtained from 112. All results will be given in terms of percentages.

Preferences as stated from appearance of flowers when received and after five days were as follows:

	When received	After five days
	Percent	Percent
Roses	51	20
Carnations	41	34
Chrysanthemums	4.5	36
No single preference	3.5	10

The intention was for immediate preferences to be based entirely on appearance of the flowers as received. Actually, this did not always account for the answer given. In order to ascertain more about their answer they were asked to state why they made their preference selection. Reasons given for preferences were as follows:

	For preference when flowers first received	For preference after five days' use
	Percent	Percent
Always liked that flower best	38	..
Actual appearance	31	..
Past experience	7	..
Last longer	56
More attractive bouquet	36
Other reasons	3	8
No reason given	21	..

Most of those who gave the reason that they "always liked that flower best" stated their preference for roses. From preferences given by panel members when flowers were first received it would seem that when flowers were displayed in a super market that many people would be influenced by their precipitant choice and past experience with the flowers offered. However, it also appears that for repeat sales the lasting qualities are most important. It must be remembered that this preference study was in no way influenced by prices for which the flowers might be sold.

Of interest is the change in preference after five days' use of the flowers. Apparently, past notions of flowers played an important part in the answers of panel members at the time they received the flowers. Chrysanthemums were at the bottom of the list on the first or "impulse" judgment. After five days they were the most preferred of the three.

Most of the change to mums came from those naming roses at first. All of those preferring mums at first retained their preference later. The least change in preference was of those who said they preferred carnations, only one-sixth of these changed their preference to other flowers later.

Why did they change their minds? Of those who changed their preference from:

1. Roses to carnations (11%)—Most said it was because carnations lasted longer and the remainder thought carnations made a nicer bouquet.
2. Roses to chrysanthemums (20%)—All but one of these said they preferred the chrysanthemums because they lasted longer.
3. Roses to a combination of flowers (6%)—Most liked some combination of the flowers because the carnations and mums lasted longer.
4. Carnations to roses (5%)—Thought roses made a better bouquet.
5. Carnations to chrysanthemums (10%)—All said it was because the mums held up better.
6. Carnations to combinations (4%)—Most thought they made more attractive bouquet.

All who preferred mums at first had the same preference after five days.

COLOR PREFERENCE

Each recipient of flowers was asked to specify her color preference in roses, carnations, and chrysanthemums. This was not to be associated with the flowers given them. Following are the results of this question:

Color	Roses	Carnations	Chrysanthemums
	Percent	Percent	Percent
Red	54.5	46.4	
Yellow	22.3	.9	56.6
Pink9	8.9	.9
White		12.5	12.4
Mixed	5.4	10.7	6.2
Other	6.2	4.5	6.2
No answer	10.7	16.1	17.7
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Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

These were all “write-in” answers so that they would be influenced in no way. These color preferences should not be construed as meaning that even these panel members would buy these colors in this ratio. The acceptance when offerings are made might be influenced by other things about the flowers. Such caution should always be observed in the use of “preference” panel results.

Apparently, the preference for individual colors in the individual flowers was not pronounced. When asked whether they preferred a mixed or solid color bouquet, 82 percent said they preferred mixed and only 16 percent said they preferred a solid color.

Were the housewives influenced in their stated color preference for roses by the color which they received?

Of those receiving red roses, 63 percent said they preferred red roses and 11 percent yellow roses. Of those who got yellow roses, 47 percent preferred red roses and 33 percent preferred yellow. This shows a significant* effect of color received to preference stated. However, the total preference percentage was not affected, since equal numbers of each were given out. With flowers of equal quality, then, we could expect five sales of red roses to two sales of yellow—assuming no effect of preference for color other than red or yellow.

FREQUENCY OF PURCHASE

A question was included to determine how often cut flowers or potted plants were purchased for the home. The answers were grouped into classifications for tabulation and the following percentage found in each group.

Frequency of purchase	Cut flowers	Potted plants
	Percent	Percent
One or two times per year	47.3	39.3
Three or four times per year	11.6	18.8
Five or more times per year	16.1	13.4
Special occasions only	8.0	9.8
Never	10.7	10.7
No answer	6.3	8.0
Total	100.0	100.0

*In this paper the term “significant” refers to statistical tests of results.

The following tabulation shows the percentages by income groups:

	Cut Flowers			Potted Plants		
	Low income	Medium income	High income	Low income	Medium income	High income
	Percent					
One or two times per year	49	38	55	41	32	43
Three or four times per year . . .	6	17	11	19	22	16
Five or more times per year	6	27	14	10	11	18
Special occasion only	10	8	7	10	11	9
Never	16	5	11	10	13	9
No answer	13	5	2	10	11	5
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

It is very evident that there was a significant variation in frequency of purchase of cut flowers as determined by income groups. Even for each frequency class the income groups acted significantly different with the exception of those purchasing for special occasion only. Unexplained, however, is the fact that the medium income group reported significantly more flower purchases than the high income groups.

Income had little effect on frequency of purchase of pot plants in direct contrast to its effect on purchase of cut flowers.

It would appear from this analysis that pot plants could be more readily sold in low income areas than could cut flowers—at prices usually prevailing. This study indicates that while sale of flowers may be higher in income brackets above the lower third, higher income beyond this has little effect on sales. In turn, this points to the need of some kind of promotion for flowers for other than special occasion use if sales are to be increased.