

## Profile and behavior of flower consumer: subsidies for marketing actions

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### ABSTRACT

The growth of per capita consumption of flowers in Brazil is still low when compared with other countries. Among several factors that may be linked to this growth gap, the establishment of few or ineffective marketing strategies was cited. In this context, we present the results of the profile and behavior of flower consumer, aiming to subsidize marketing actions for the retail segment of flower supply chain. The study was conducted through interviews with 300 people of both genders at the moment they were buying flowers at 22 flower shops in the Paraná coast. This region was selected due to its potential for flower production and commercialization, which is similar to other Brazilian regions and other countries where the flower market has economic relevance. The female gender was identified as the major consumer (n = 62.7%), with tendency of increase in consumption as education level advanced (Spearman correlation coefficient,  $p < 0.05$  = for own use  $r = 0.122$ ;  $p = 0.039$ ; for gift  $r = 0.174$ ;  $p = 0.003$ ). The acquisition average of  $4.4 \pm 1.9$  times per year was registered, with preferential consumption of orchids (n = 36.3% for own use) and roses (n = 86.7%, for gift). The flower retail trade did not meet the expectations of consumers, especially in relation to price, promotions, and production quality. The male gender and the elderly consumer class may represent important alternatives to increase the current consumption of flowers.

**Key words:** flower trade; retail; agribusiness; ornamental plants and flowers; sales strategies.

### RESUMO

#### Perfil e comportamento do consumidor de flores: subsídios para ações de marketing

O crescimento do consumo per capita de flores no Brasil ainda é baixo quando comparado a outros países, entre os vários fatores que podem estar atrelados a este desnível de crescimento cita-se o estabelecimento de poucas ou ineficientes estratégias de marketing. Neste contexto, apresenta-se resultado da avaliação do perfil e comportamento do consumidor de flores, visando a subsidiar as ações de marketing para o segmento comercial varejista da cadeia produtiva de floricultura. O estudo foi realizado a partir de entrevistas a 300 pessoas de ambos os gêneros no momento em que compravam flores em 22 floriculturas do litoral do Paraná. Esta região foi selecionada em função de seu potencial de produção e comercialização de flores que é similar a outras regiões brasileiras e outros países onde a floricultura apresenta relevância econômica. Identificou-se o gênero feminino como consumidor majoritário (n = 62,7%), com tendência a elevação no consumo a medida que avançava a escolaridade (Coeficiente de Correlação de Spearman,  $p < 0,05$  = uso próprio  $r = 0,122$ ;  $p = 0,039$ ; presentear  $r = 0,174$ ;  $p = 0,003$ ). Registrou-se média de aquisição de  $4,4 \pm 1,9$  vezes por ano, com consumo preferencial de orquídeas (n = 36,3% para uso próprio) e rosas (n = 86,7%, para presentear). O comércio varejista de flores não atendia a expectativa dos clientes especialmente em relação a preço, promoções e qualidade da produção. O gênero masculino e a classe de consumidores da terceira idade podem representar importantes alternativas de incremento ao consumo atual de flores.

**Palavras-chave:** comércio de flores; comércio varejista; agronegócio; plantas ornamentais; estratégias de vendas.

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## INTRODUCTION

The flower market in Brazil has been growing in the last decades, both in production and in trade as a result of the increase of new cultivation areas, adoption of new technologies, and improvement of the quality of the products offered to consumers (Junqueira & Peetz, 2014).

Despite the growth, the *per capita* consumption of flowers and ornamental plants in Brazil (average \$ 7.5 *per year*) is still very low when compared with other countries (Junqueira & Peetz, 2008), especially in Europe (average = \$ 60.00 *per year*) and the United States (average = \$ 37 *per year*), and it is more concentrated in holidays (Mateus *et al.*, 2010; Anacleto *et al.*, 2014).

The increase of 42.6% in Brazilian *per capita* income in the last decade, from R\$ 849.75 in 2003 to R\$ 1,151.07 in 2012 (IBGE, 2013b), apparently led to an increase in the flower consumption, US \$ 4.50 in 2003 to \$ 7.00 in the same period (Machado Neto *et al.*, 2013; Baldotto *et al.*, 2015). However, this growth is still low if compared with other commercial products in a similar period. The increase in consumption of other commercial products in the same period as perfumes, cosmetics, and chocolates (Ibope Mídia, 2013) was 170%; wine was 20% *per year* (Vieira, 2007); and the consumption fashion brand clothes had an expansion of 50% *per year* (Campos & Yoshida, 2010).

The regional flower market is still embryonic and little is known about this model of commercial relationship, especially about the marketing mix and what assumptions are conditioning in the satisfaction of the consumers' desires, and the trade can be expanded, but corrective actions of production development should be taken, especially related to consumption as described by Baldotto *et al.* (2012), Anacleto & Negrelle (2013), Santos *et al.* (2015), Baldotto *et al.* (2015) and Soares *et al.* (2016).

Several factors may be linked to this growth gap of flower market in relation to other products. One of them could be few or ineffective marketing strategies (Cozer *et al.*, 2008; Junqueira & Peetz, 2008; Landgraf & Paiva, 2009; Machado Neto *et al.*, 2013; Anacleto *et al.*, 2014). When they occur, they are often made by small retail establishments which target only the local level market, limited to lower prices, and they do not pay attention to the products and services diversification (Cozer *et al.*, 2008, Anacleto *et al.*, 2014). Often, these strategies are not linked to an effective knowledge of consumer behavior profile (Kotler & Keller, 2012). In developing countries which emerge in the flower global business scenario such as Israel and African and South America countries, the production of cut flowers has focused primarily in foreign markets due to the unimpressive local market and the good knowledge about consumer habits from regions that traditionally are flower consumers (FAO, 2013).

The application of prospective techniques about marketing mix and profile and consumer behavior may provide the basis to solve this problem (Malhotra, 2010; Bakshi, 2012), as occurred in the flower market in Asia, which exploration began from the production strengthening trying to meet the needs of consumers in other countries by exportation (FAO, 2013).

The concept of the marketing mix is focused on product configuration, price determination to generate higher sales volume, and supports several kinds of deals and promotions which are complemented by a wide distribution. Thus, it is understood as marketing mix factors that directly influence the consumer's decision to purchase (product, price, promotion, and distribution), determining customer satisfaction levels in post-purchase (Kotler, 2011).

The marketing mix is linked to consumer profile (age, income, geographic location, among other indicators) as well as the consumer behavior. So, it covers the activities that are directly involved in obtaining, consuming, and disposing products and services, including the decision processes which precede and follow these purchase actions (Malhotra, 2010; Bakshi, 2012).

In this context, to subsidize the establishment of marketing actions for the retail segment of the flower production chain, the result of the evaluation of the profile and behavior of flower consumer is presented, which aims to identify the habits and consumption frequency, preferred species for purchase, consumer satisfaction in relation to consumption, consumers' segments with potential to expand consumption, main barriers for consumption, and proposes strategies that can increase the consumption of flowers in the retail sphere considering species both for own consumption and for gift.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was accomplished through interviews with flower consumers in Southern Brazil. This region was selected because of its potential for production and commercialization of flowers associated to an increasing *per capita* income, similar to other countries in development. With a tropical climate, super-humid, without dry season, free from frost, and near four major consumer centers (Curitiba, Ponta Grossa and Paranaguá -PR and Joinville - SC), this region is configured in a regional center for flower production (Anacleto & Negrelle, 2013).

Besides having a regional population of more than 250,000 inhabitants and *per capita* income of 765.85 (average) (Anacleto & Negrelle, 2013; IBGE, 2013b; IPARDES, 2013), this region receives two million summer tourists with potential consumption annually (IBGE, 2013a). Additionally, the strong relationship with the port

business has given the inhabitants of Paranaguá, main town of the Paraná coast, the strengthening of population purchasing power in the last decades (Godoy, 2000). Paranaguá is the seventh city in financial revenue of the state. It is classified as medium-sized city, with *per capita* conditions similar to other 160 Brazilian cities (IBGE, 2013a).

This is an exploratory and descriptive study (Schimmenti *et al.*, 2013) using semi-structured interviews applied from May to June of 2013. The population sample (n = 300) met the marketing research guidelines of assessing 200-400 people, when the population is unknown (Malhotra, 2010). The cluster sampling included consumers in 22 flower stores, identified from Trade Associations in Paranaguá, Guaratuba, Matinhos, Morretes, Antonina, and Pontal do Paraná, in the Paraná coast. In each of these companies, consumers were monitored for two days. All visitors recorded in this period were interviewed, except when they did not agree in participating.

To define the profile of these consumers, information such as gender, age, marital status, education, and economic status was collected (Malhotra, 2010). It was adopted the age distribution according to IBGE (2013b) and the classification of the economic condition according to *Critério Brasil* (ABEP, 2013).

The evaluation of the influence of gender, age, education, and economic status on flower consumption levels was evaluated according to the proposal of Anacleto *et al.* (2014). Therefore, non-parametric tests of Mann-Whitney and Kruskal-Wallis were applied, followed by the medium multiple comparison test of Dunn, on a significance level of 5% ( $p < 0.05$ ).

The existence of correlation between the consumption and the analyzed variables (age, gender, income, and education) was assessed using Spearman's correlation coefficient (Hair *et al.*, 2009).

The normality of the data according to Hair *et al.* (2009) proposal was analyzed using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test and the test results ( $p < 0.05$ ) led to the decision to use non-parametric tests.

The consumption behavior was established from data about frequency, reason, and purchase of preferred product (Malhotra, 2010).

The marketing mix (price, place, promotion, and product) was evaluated considering the customer satisfaction level according to the regional supply. Additionally, the people interviewed were questioned about five potential factors that lead them to buy more flowers, categorizing hierarchically from 1 to 5.

The evaluation of consumer satisfaction level was made by Kano Model of attractive and mandatory quality (Kano, *et al.* 1984). This model identifies which attributes the customer ranks as mandatory and prerequisite for

consumption. It also classifies the satisfaction obtained in the post-consumption process, in the following categories:

a) If the expected range of prerequisites before purchase is greater than the post-purchase satisfaction, product requirements must have improvements;

b) If the pre- and post-purchase attributes are similar, retailers only prevent the customer from being dissatisfied (neutral attributes);

c) If the prerequisites before purchase are less than the post-consumer satisfaction, this means that the product is at optimal levels in relation to the market (positive attributes) and meets consumer needs and desires.

## RESULTS

Most consumers registered in the evaluated flower stores were female. This gender has also been identified as the one that more often buys flowers for their own use. However, the interview did not detect difference between genders in the frequency of buying flowers for gift (Mann-Whitney =  $p < 0.001$ ) (Table 1).

The predominant age group of purchasing (68.6%) was 20-44 years old, and no correlation was observed between age and consumption of flowers (Table 1). A difference in annual frequency of buying flowers regarding the marital status of consumers was observed. It was evident that divorced people bought fewer flowers for personal use than single and married people. However, this difference was not observed in case of flowers for gift (Table 1).

Related to education, a significant portion of respondents was graduated in college or had post-degree. As the education advanced, a slight tendency to increase the consumption was observed, both for their own use and for gift (Table 1).

Most consumers were of A and B economic classes (85%). However, no significant discrepancy in the annual frequency of flower consumption among different economic classes was detected (Table 1).

Related to purchase frequency, only 0.8% of buyers reported buying flowers for the first time, all the other respondents had already bought flowers in the last six months.

Among the respondents (n = 300), there was an annual average of flower purchase occasions of  $2.15 \pm 3.23$  and  $2.19 \pm 1.90$  per year for their own use and for gift, respectively. Most respondents indicated the frequency of less than twice a year (75% for own use and 66.7% for gift).

The purchases referred to own use were based on the search of flowers for residence (53%) and garden (28%) decorations.

**Table 1:** Characterization of the evaluated population sample of flower consumer profile in the Paraná coast (N = 300, May-June 2013)

Measured Criterion	Total of interviewed People	Annual frequency of flower purchase (average $\pm$ standard deviation)	
		For own use average $\pm$ standard deviation	For gift average $\pm$ standard deviation
Gender			
Female	188	2.68 $\pm$ 3.58 a	2.28 $\pm$ 2.03 a
Male	112	1.26 $\pm$ 2.28 a	2.04 $\pm$ 1.67 b
Mann-Whitney test <i>p</i> – Significance value		<i>p</i> < 0,001	<i>p</i> = 0.524
Age (years old)			
15 a 19 years old	9	0.56 $\pm$ 0.53 a	0.67 $\pm$ 0.71 a
20 – 24	43	0.81 $\pm$ 0.82 a	0.86 $\pm$ 0.94 a
25 a 29	38	0.95 $\pm$ 1.41 a	1.58 $\pm$ 1.22 a
30 a 34	39	1.59 $\pm$ 2.27 a	1.69 $\pm$ 0.89 a
35 a 39	45	2.13 $\pm$ 2.62 a	2.73 $\pm$ 2.09 a
40 a 44	40	3.28 $\pm$ 5.82 a	2.55 $\pm$ 1.38 a
45 a 49	23	1.57 $\pm$ 2.61 a	2.00 $\pm$ 1.13 a
50 a 54	15	2.87 $\pm$ 2.33 a	3.33 $\pm$ 3.02 a
55 a 59	20	4.20 $\pm$ 3.50 a	3.05 $\pm$ 2.52 a
60 a 64	24	4.21 $\pm$ 3.62 a	3.63 $\pm$ 1.58 a
65 a 69	3	4.33 $\pm$ 1.53 a	6.67 $\pm$ 5.77 a
Up to 70	0	-	-
<i>r</i> – Spearman correlation coefficient;		<i>r</i> = 0.386;	<i>r</i> = 0.488;
<i>p</i> – Significance value ( <i>p</i> < 0.05)		<i>p</i> < 0.001	<i>p</i> < 0.001
Education			
Elementary	21	1.70 $\pm$ 1.95 a	1.60 $\pm$ 0.87 a
High School	149	1.63 $\pm$ 0.88 a	1.80 $\pm$ 0.92 a
Graduation	93	2.07 $\pm$ 3.51 b	2.00 $\pm$ 1.80 b
Post-graduation	37	3.42 $\pm$ 2.28 c	3.45 $\pm$ 1.55 c
<i>r</i> – Spearman correlation coefficient;		<i>r</i> = 0.122;	<i>r</i> = 0.174;
<i>p</i> – Significance value ( <i>p</i> < 0.05)		<i>p</i> = 0.039	<i>p</i> = 0.003
Marital Status			
Married	209	2.24 $\pm$ 3.55 a	2.10 $\pm$ 1.82 a
Single	71	2.31 $\pm$ 2.48 a	2.68 $\pm$ 2.17 a
Divorced	20	0.86 $\pm$ 1.07 b	1.71 $\pm$ 1.98 a
Kruskal-Wallis test		<i>p</i> = 0.027	<i>p</i> = 0.070
M – Average; DP – Standard deviation; <i>p</i> – Significance value; a – group with no significant difference ( <i>p</i> > 0.05 in the test of multiple comparison by Dunn procedure)			
Socioeconomic Classification			
A1	13	1.00 $\pm$ 0.81 a	2.10 $\pm$ 1.84 a
A2	54	2.60 $\pm$ 2.06 a	2.47 $\pm$ 2.33 a
B2	104	1.89 $\pm$ 2.33 a	2.16 $\pm$ 1.86 a
B2	86	2.03 $\pm$ 3.49 a	1.90 $\pm$ 1.61 a
C1	31	2.45 $\pm$ 2.47 a	2.41 $\pm$ 2.35 a
C2	8	2.28 $\pm$ 3.56 a	2.42 $\pm$ 2.38 a
D	3	1.50 $\pm$ 2.24 a	1.50 $\pm$ 2.27 a
E	0	-	-
<i>r</i> – Spearman correlation coefficient;		<i>r</i> = -0.004;	<i>r</i> = 0.057;
<i>p</i> – Significance value ( <i>p</i> < 0.05)		<i>p</i> = 0.944	<i>p</i> = 0.335

Averages followed by the same letter are not statistically different from each other

The indication of buying for gift was related to holidays, with emphasis on Mother's Day, Valentine's Day, and birthdays (Table 2).

The products listed as preferred for own consumption were orchids, violets, and roses. For gift, the major choice was rose (Table 3).

In relation the marketing mix, the study showed the predominance of consumer dissatisfaction in the considered factors (price, place, promotion, and product). It was observed that consumers emphasized the attributes related to the product, especially appearance, quantity, and diversity (Table 4).

**Table 2:** Days when consumers buy flowers in Paraná Coast (n = 300, May and June 2013)

Days	N	%
Mother's Day	198	66.0
Valentine's Day	102	34.0
Birthday	71	23.7
Woman's Day	62	20.7
Christmas	57	19.0
Funerals	25	8.3
All Souls' Day	19	6.3
Prom	5	1.7
Father's Day	2	0.7
Weddings	2	0.7

Question with simultaneous choices.

The main factors which would lead the customer to buy more flowers were lower price, best deals, and promotions, and greater diversity of flowers and more stores, enabling easier access to these places (Table 5).

## DISCUSSION

Marketing is a procedure that involves two parts, in which one of them tries to satisfy the desires or needs of the other, occurring the change of value or profit. Therefore, while one part has its desire or need satisfied, the other gets some kind of value or profit (Kotler & Keller, 2012). Thus, marketing is a social process in which individuals or groups of people get what they need or want through the free dealing of goods and services from other people, groups, or organizations. The satisfaction of needs is related to human demands such as food, clothing, education, among others. The fulfillment of desires is associated to individual characteristics, shaped by culture and environmental stimuli, as described by Blackwell *et al.* (2006), Meyer & Schwager (2007), and Vieira (2012).

In case of accomplishment of both need and desire, marketing can direct its efforts in three aspects: maintenance of frequent customers, loyalty of sporadic customers, and attraction of new customers. Specifically, as it relates to flower commercialization, marketing adopts

**Table 3:** Flower species preferred by consumers in the Paraná coast (n = 300, May and June 2013).

Flowers Species(Own use)	N	%	Flowers Species(gift)	n	%
Orchids	109	36.3	Roses	260	86.7
Violets	81	27.0	Orchids	178	59.3
Roses	75	25.0	Lilies	46	15.3
Daisy	38	12.7	Violets	44	14.7
Azaleas	30	10.0	Gerberas	36	12.0
Lilies	22	7.3	Primroses	30	10.0
Kalanchoe	19	6.3	Daisy	27	9.0
Begonias	17	5.7	Tulips	24	8.0
Gerbera	16	5.3	Azaleas	20	6.7
Dahlias	13	4.3	Begonia	15	5.0
Begonia	12	4.0	Cyclamen	14	4.7
Gillyflower	11	3.7	Dahlia	11	3.7
Chrysanthemum	10	3.3	Kalanchoes	10	3.3
Fern	8	2.7	Hemerocales	5	1.7
Cyclamen	7	2.3	Hydrangeas	4	1.3
Hemerocales	7	2.3			
Bromeliads	7	2.3			
Tulips	6	2.0			
Calla Lily	6	2.0			
Petunia	6	2.0			
Primroses	5	1.7			
Sunflower	4	1.3			

Question with simultaneous choices

the desire satisfaction performance model, being the acquisitions accomplished by impulse or habit (Junqueira & Peetz, 2008).

The desire satisfaction is interpreted differently by men and women, determining specific consumer behaviors for each gender (Anacleto *et al.*, 2014). The research results analysis reported here showed women of 20-45 years old and higher social status as frequent users. This profile evidenced that in Paraná, the situation is similar to what is observed in other Brazilian regions (Junqueira & Peetz, 2008; Landgraf & Paiva, 2009; Machado Neto *et al.*, 2013), as well as in other emerging flower markets like China, India, and other Asian and African countries (Nabso, 2008; FAO, 2013; Saha *et al.*, 2014.)

However, in general, this is not a public for which there is a specific marketing strategy. In other words, there is a

spontaneous demand that could be improved if specific strategies were adopted. Thus, the marketing actions should be directed towards maintaining this female public to broaden their consumption frequency. In this perspective, the marketing strategy should be focused on the greater involvement of the consumer with the product; thus, the benefits would be well explained (Blackwell *et al.*, 2006).

The flower retailers should invest in advertising directed at women, such as shelves with characteristic colors and simultaneous exposition of flowers with displays or posters referring to the thought of the contemporary woman. Also, the sales company must be focused on more durable marketing actions, valuing the consumer through frequent contacts to offer more information about new products as well as technical guidance (Bakewell & Mitchell, 2006).

**Table 4:** Rating of attractive and obligatory quality satisfaction of the consumer related to marketing mix of flower market - Kano Model (1984) (n = 300; Paraná coast, May-June 2013)

		Prerequisite consumption (average score)	Post-purchasing satisfaction (average score)	Attribute Rate	Attribute Classification
Price	Price	4.62	3.76	- 0.86	Negative
Place	Find the desired quantity	4.58	4.44	- 0.14	Negative
	Find easily the desired flower	4.59	4.46	- 0.13	Negative
Promotion	Promotion	4.45	3.66	- 0.79	Negative
Product	Quantity of open flowers	3.99	4.23	+ 0.24	Positive
	Flower origin information	3.30	3.30	0	Neutral
	Quantity of units <i>per</i> package	4.30	4.30	0	Neutral
	Quality of service	4.71	4.40	- 0.31	Negative
	Flower appearance	4.82	4.61	- 0.21	Negative
	Flower standardization	4.50	4.33	- 0.17	Negative
	Flower colors	4.70	4.54	- 0.16	Negative
Package appearance	4.43	4.34	- 0.09	Negative	

**Table 5:** Main factors that motivated the consumption of flowers in the Paraná coast (n = 300, May and June 2013)

Motivating factor	N	%
Lower price	74	24.7
More promotion	59	19.7
More variety and/or exotic flowers	45	15.0
More accessibility and places of sale	30	10.0
More quality	20	6.6
Better service	12	4.0
If the person knew how to take care of flowers	11	3.7
More time to take care of flowers	8	2.7
If the person had someone to gift	8	2.7
More durability of flowers	6	2.0
Delivery	6	2.0
More information about how to take care of flowers	6	2.0
Sales in other places besides flower store	5	1.7
Adequate physical space at home	5	1.7
Customized packaging according to commemorative dates	5	1.7

Some simple strategies can be adopted to allow a greater identification between the consumer class and the flowers. Nabso (2008) reported that the service of retailers at the time of sale with guidance on how to take care of flowers, how to increase longevity in the post-purchase, and manuals of how to cultivate are low-cost tactics that result in an impact on the consumer.

Another aspect that was evident in the research was the low incidence of consumption by men. As shown in other places, the male public usually buys flowers especially in seasonal and special dates (Cozer *et al.*, 2008). Thus, out of these seasonal periods, other possibilities to increase the presence of this public in the flower stores should be considered, besides the traditional dates presented by the market.

The contemporary scenario that includes the emancipation of women, increasingly exposes man as actor of roles previously seen as exclusive for women, especially to make purchases for home (Bakshi, 2012). Additionally, men still have more buying power than women (Bakewell & Mitchell, 2006; Bakshi, 2012). Thus, the male universe is a trade component to be effectively considered in the flower market.

However, the first challenge is in direction to “awaken” men to desire and recognize the need for flower consumption. In this context, communication with the potential consumer should be associated to a conative attitudinal answer, which is related to behavioral tendency directed by marketing.

The male consumer, different from female consumers, are generally not enthusiastic in going shopping. Also, cognitive male capacities determine that this consumer is more decided when buying flowers, valuing information about the target product, efficiency, and fast service (Bakewell & Mitchell, 2006). Men are also less susceptible to buying by impulse (Bakshi, 2012). Thus, the marketing strategies related to the male gender should worth the benefits of flowers associated to good deals and partnerships, loving seduction, apologies, or surprises to demonstrate affection.

Thus, flowers different from traditional ones found in flower shops, creative arrangements, innovative services such as internet sales, as well as the offer of products with themes as seduction, friendship, and professional recognition may be more attractive to this genre and can be considered as important arguments in the search for the greater insertion of this consumer in specialized stores, as also described by Cozer *et al.* (2008).

The international trade of flowers has a similar effect according to Cozer *et al.* (2008); however, as men tend to be resistant to buying by impulse, marketing actions seek to value the importance of flowers on occasions and special dates enhancing advertising in these periods (Yue & Behe, 2010; Bakshi, 2012).

It is important to mention that men, when satisfied in post-purchasing evaluation, tend to be very loyal in consumption. Cozer *et al.* (2008) suggested that the consumption of flowers should be also highlighted by marketing, the symbolic meanings that exceed the scale of monetary value, and serve as input in the connection between product and consumer.

A third important consumer segment evidenced in this research is the elderly, observing that this class did not express its real potential of flowers consumption. In Brazil, as in other parts of the world, the elderly are seen as a rising public in relation to consumption (Debert, 2003; Zanon *et al.*, 2013). This trend is set by the extension of life expectancy and the growth of economic income of this class (Debert, 2003; Zanon *et al.*, 2013; Stoever, 2013). The elderly global population grew up three times more than the total population (47% and 15.7%, respectively) and is expected to double in the next 25 years (Zanon *et al.*, 2013; Stoever, 2013). The costs of this public with products related to wish fulfillment (non-essential products) can vary in around 5% of disposable income and it represents 31% of people in A and B economic classes in Brazil (Esteves *et al.*, 2012).

In terms of marketing strategy, it is important to consider that the profile of elderly consumer undergoes changes, differing as the age of consumers advance (Debert, 2003; Stoever, 2013). In this dynamic, those who have recently reached the elderly age are more easily influenced by marketing strategies (Lopes *et al.*, 2013). Also, it is important to consider that these public values very clear information about target product (Blackwell *et al.*, 2006). Additionally, these public answers favorably when there is repetition of information, which younger people often consider irritating (Debert, 2003; Lopes *et al.*, 2013).

It is worth mentioning that marketing directed at elderly consumers should be developed by professionals who understand the behavior, habits, and values of this age group (Stoever, 2013). In this perspective, the image and marketing should reset the later stages of life as favorable time for new achievements, guided by pleasure pursuit and personal satisfaction, and escape from decay stereotype (Debert, 2003).

Regardless of gender or age group, the marketing strategies should prioritize the care of marketing mix elements shown to be inadequate by flower consumers evaluated. Among these elements, we evidenced the discontentment of the consumers especially related to the quality of the product and quantity of shops available. It is vital that the retailer assures the consumer of the quality of the product, as this can determine the commercial success or failure (Blackwell *et al.*, 2006). The standardization of products, certification origin, and

technical assistance in the post-purchasing can lead the retailer to achieve this goal.

Additionally, the expansion of network places supports the view of this product and consequently increases consumption (Blackwell *et al.*, 2006). The choice of the places for insertion of these stores should meet specific requirements, especially by the elderly, such as easy access, environmental comfort, rooms for resting, and nearby parking space.

On the other hand, prices, considered high by consumers, along with lack of promotions in this assessed commercial segment, would be important elements to consider in marketing strategies as well. According to Kotler (2011), the first instance of satisfaction of most consumers in any market segment is related to the price.

In this context, it is important to understand what is the motivation that makes the consumers purchase, leading them to the purchase decision. It is known that the consumer can be influenced by cultural, social, personal, and psychological factors, as well as situational factors (occasional) coming from the physical and mental conditions of the consumer, such as the sensation experienced at the purchase time as humor, sadness, and missing someone.

Thus, flower retailers can act decisively by provoking this type of motivation, such as issuing invitations to small meetings with cocktails to show the new varieties of flowers and invitations to visit fairs and flower parties that occur in the region.

This kind of action allows the consumers to learn about several flower species and products previously unknown to them. Once consumers know a new product, they evaluate it, verifying if the flower offered to them really satisfy their needs, and, thus, decide whether to make the purchase.

Another alternative is related to the new trade technologies that have been consolidated in the general market and that were not perceived by the flower market. These actions are based on relationship marketing, which can be considered simple and easy to execute by retailers and have had a great impact on new commercial forms. At the moment of flower purchasing, retailers can perform customer information collection, but should consider consumer preferences and also the marital status, gender self-denomination, and commemorative dates according to the consumer profile. So, the retailers can take advantage of these new forms of contact using social networks, especially WhatsApp and Facebook; in this new context of technological advancement, retailers can advertise their products and inform the promotions in force in real time by sending pictures and other actions that arouse consumers' desire to buy flowers.

The use of these digital technologies in the flower market can be adopted in perfect harmony with several other sales mechanisms that need to be potentialized in the regional flower market such as advertisement, sales promotion, merchandising, and other commercial segments.

This new business model with the insertion of new technologies can result in significant changes in the sales growth. Mateus *et al.* (2010) and Anacleto *et al.* (2014) described that Brazilians have low consumption of flowers due to the lack of habit and also by the lack of memory of buying flowers. The post-purchase service is little used by the flower retail market, but if it was adopted it could show positive changes in consumption.

This stage consists in evaluating whether the product has met expectations, thus giving the consumers the opportunity to express their opinion about the species, the benefits, and the satisfaction obtained with the flower. To strengthen a market niche still in the embryonic stage, it is very important to promote a detailed diagnosis on the difficulties encountered by the consumers in the correct application of the cultivation treatments that guarantee the longevity of the flowers after the purchase.

The observed scenario reveals the urgent need to implement these more harmonic commercial combinations between retailers and consumers, which can culminate with the increase of consumption levels.

Consumers choose from a wide range of products offered, those that, according to their values or outside influence, offer the best gain sensation. Thus, the practice of more appropriate prices adjusted to the regional reality, promotions, or deals with benefits to consumers can positively influence the increment of this product consumption.

In a general context, it could be said that the well-oriented marketing strategy leads to overcoming consumer expectations for the purchase made, resulting in new acquisitions and customer loyalty (Vieira, 2012).

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The consumption of flowers occurs more frequently by women on an average of 4.4 times *per* year; orchids and roses are the preferred species of the consumers both for their own use and for gifting.

The retail flower market does not meet the customers' expectations in relation to the marketing mix and few or sparse actions of retailers are made to reverse this business environment.

Men and elderly consumer class may represent important alternatives to increase the current flower consumption.



Regardless of the consumer class, the adequacy of the price of flowers to the reality of the consumers, the expansion of shop network, and the supply of quality products are viable strategies to strengthen the marketing management in flower market and the adoption of these marketing actions can ensure greater competitiveness in the sector and the consumption loyalty.

New studies that can assess the viability of other marketing strategies should be considered, which could result in increasing consumption and flower market competitiveness, such as:

Expand the dialogue among the several spheres of the supply chain, with the retail market guiding the production based on consumer's desires related to marketing mix;

Create specific strategies of consumer marketing, directing actions to the consumers' desire in line with the objectives of marriage, business, and cultural, religious, and economic aspects;

Create a communication channel with loyal customers, who can help in reading market trends and levels of consumption satisfaction;

Diversify forms of advertising on special dates such as Valentine's Day, Mother's Day, and others;

Segment the market into economic categories, directing the supply of flowers for each income class;

Expand the flower supply via Internet as a way to achieve consumption among young people;

Create new forms of design and arrangements and vases offer; and

Analyze the logistics chain as a way to reduce the cost to the consumer.

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