MANAGEMENT OF POTTED ORNAMENTAL PLANTS IN HUNGARY

MANAGEMENTUL PLANTELOR ORNAMENALE ÎN UNGARIA

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Abstract: *This study examined customer's observations regarding potted plants, annual ornamental plants, potted plants and wreaths by scale analysis which is a method of marketing research. The purchase decision of a customer always depends on several factors. External and internal factors influence the decision of the customer. The aim of our primer on marketing research was to provide background information necessary for marketing decisions. 1650 questionnaires were used. The scale was unipolar, the respondents were asked to appraise how characteristic the description for a given product was. According to the responses the most important factors which influence the purchase decision are the fragrance of the flower, the length of the stem and the intact leaves. In Hungary certain flowers are still only purchased seasonally. Customers expect annual ornamental plants to have decorative flowers and leaves during the entire summer. New species are expected to appear on the market year by year and these are important as they will be more resistant to climate and other factors. According to the respondents it is important that potted plants have an extended blossoming period and/or decorative leaves for a long period of time as well as a good ability to adapt to the circumstances. A new marketing strategy can look at different colours and pot styles. In Hungary customers prefer wreaths made of natural materials decorated with dried or living flowers. During the course of our study we worked out recommendations for marketing communication, packaging and attention-getting methods that could assist vendors in selling their products more effectively and also enable them to more fully satisfy their customers interests.*

Key words: *image profile, potted plans, consumers' expectation*

1. INTRODUCTION

A new marketing strategy can look at different colours and pot styles. In Hungary customers prefer wreaths made of natural materials

decorated with dried or living flowers. During the course of our study we worked out recommendations for marketing communication, packaging and attention-getting methods that could assist vendors in selling their products more effectively and also enable them to more fully satisfy their customers interests.

Our study examined customer's observations regarding annual ornamental plants, potted plants and wreaths by scale analysis which is a method of marketing research. The purchase decision of a customer always depends on several factors. The decision of the customer is influenced by external and internal factors (Czeglédi, 2008). The aim of our primer on marketing research was to provide background information necessary for marketing decisions. 1650 questionnaires were used. The scale was unipolar, the respondents were asked to appraise how characteristic the description for a given product was.

2. MATERIAL AND METHOD

2.1. THE MAIN POTTED PLANTS

Potted Moth orchid (Phalaenopsis taxa) are exceptionally popular in Hungary. Since 2001 they have topped the sales list of potted ornamental plants. The orchid's forms are extremely variable and available in very special colours. There were, however, just two [of the genus Phalaenopsis and Cymbidium] in the centre of attention out of a large family of orchids. The steps of cultivation are resolved and gardeners already know what is the best medium, what is the most fitting temperature and what is the correct amount of light necessary. They are able to make the plants grow and flower in shorter periods of time. There are more roots on two stems than 10 years ago. Orchids are long lasting and long-living, so their popularity continues to grow. 40-50 percent of the Phalaenopsis taxa are grown in Europe. The Phalenopsis species and types can bloom throughout the year and there is an incredible variety of flower colours, although white is still the most popular.

Based on surveys from 2007 the *African Violet (Saintpaulia ionantha)* ranked tenth in the potted ornamental plant market with about 2% of the market share (Schmidt, 2010). In the Hungarian trade the dark blue varieties make up 50 to 60% of the total. According to the records it has been produced for over a hundred years, but only became popular as a potted ornamental plant after World War II, as the virus-resistant varieties were

considerably improved. It is now available on the market in oval, elliptical and round-leafed varieties, which can have smooth or wavy edges. The foliage colour can be light green, dark green, dark mahogany and their shades. The colours of the flowers vary too, but in the majority of Hungarian shops violet, purple, pink and white-flowered varieties are predominant. There are also greenish-white, yellow and red-flowering types. The form of the flowers refers to a large diversity of species, which may be ruffled and rich flowering, and their pattern may be striped or spotted. The range has grown with the appearance of the current types as well. *Poinsettia (Euphorbia pulcherrima)* naturally grow on the plateaus of Central America's humid, tropical areas and reach a height of 3-4 meters in the shape of a bush or tree with a trunk. Earlier it was called "Winter Star" in Hungarian. It came to Europe as a botanical curiosity in the beginning of the 1800's, but after a description of the species it sank into oblivion. Poinsettias were grown in the beginning of the 20th – and were sold as a cut flowers or as a large potted plants. However, the durability of the hypsophyll was not satisfactory. The red hues of the gleaming poinsettia leaves are not flowers, but are bracts (Schmidt, 2010). In 2007 Poinsettias were at the top of the list of blooming potted ornamental plants (Lévai et al., 2009).

2.1. THE METHOD

The semantic differential intended to measure consumer attitudes asks the subjects to scale opposing notions. (Engel et al, 2004). The scale that is interpreted for contrasts depicts them graphically. This is true also for the tested person's selected direction and intensity of emotions (Nótári, 2009a). By this feature the direction and intensity of attitudes and opinions is measured and can become represented graphically. These semantic scales allow researchers to understand the consumers' (groups) opinion about a product, its advertisement, or service. It is essential that the pairs of polar notions which are believed to measure the subjects' attitudes and opinions - are relevant with regard to the aspect of products and services. A very great advantage of the scale is that it can graphically illustrate the consumers' ideas about the competitor's products by the so-called product profile line (Nótári, 2009b).

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. IMAGE-PROFILE EXAMINATION OF MOTH ORCHID

The majority of respondents prefer purple, large flowered, normal-sized types. Beside the colour of the flowers, their openness is a decisive factor too. The length of a flower's stem is a determining element as well, as the price significantly depends on it. Most customers only buy a blooming orchid. According to our research customers do not receive adequate information about how to deal with the falling off of the blossoms and afterward, how to make the plants flourish again. Nevertheless, potted orchids are currently preferred to other potted plants among those surveyed. The indication of the products' country assures a considerable marketing advantage. Customers prefer flower shops in Hungary where the plant is mainly purchased as a present. The decorative value of the orchids is a more important factor than their durability. This may also explain their growing popularity in recent years. For detailed examination see Fig. 1.

3.2. IMAGE-PROFILE EXAMINATION OF AFRICAN VIOLET

Fig. 2. shows that, according to our research, in the case of *Saintpaulia ionantha*, respondents prefer the normal size varieties with large flowers, but the market is starting to shift the demand towards the mini-size African Violets. The rich flowered, crisped petal types are becoming more common in Hungary. Leaf shape nowadays is a less influential factor. The colour of the pots is irrelevant for the purchase decision, despite the fact that other studies point out an opposite view. This needs further research, because the colours have had significance in marketing communications. Regarding Hungarian customers, there is no longer any need for the usual paper bag packaging. When customers make a purchase they prefer flower shops and a Hungarian-language care guide included.

3.3. IMAGE-PROFILE EXAMINATION POINSETTIA

Fig. 3. shows that respondents in Hungary prefer traditional red-flowered varieties. However, yellow-flowered types gain ground as well. It has not been clearly determined if they are purchased as gifts or to decorate homes, but the volume of sales around St. Nicholas Day (6th of December) is exceptional. The Hungarian name of this plant is Nicholas Flower (the name in Hungarian language: Mikulásvirág). Plants with more branches are

preferred because they are more decorative, but these sell at a higher price. Average-sized potted poinsettias are sold most, and without a pot. Super-mini plants have no market share yet. Durability of the plant is a factor which affects purchases as well. More and more people require a Hungarian-language care guide to be included with the sold plant. After the blossoms fall off the plants are discarded because people do not know how to maintain the plants. The country where the poinsettias are grown is less of an influential factor while the price is more influential for the purchase decision.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The majority of respondents missed the Hungarian care guide alongside the potted plants. Many plants are sold with a guide, but rarely in Hungarian language. The picture which shows instruction for potted plants' care without a Hungarian-language description.

People who purchase ornamental plants in pots do not take into account the colour of the pot. We believe the reason is that in Hungary coloured pots are less widespread, although a well-chosen pot colour, which is in harmony with the plant's leaf or flower colour, can make a good impression. It can add more fun and it can help to make the already forgotten plants popular once again. There would also be no need for gift wrapping in the case of flowers that are planted in coloured pots.

The majority of respondents replied that they do not buy a potted flower together with pots, or only when the plants will be given as gifts. We think expensive pots and dull pot colours influence this decision.

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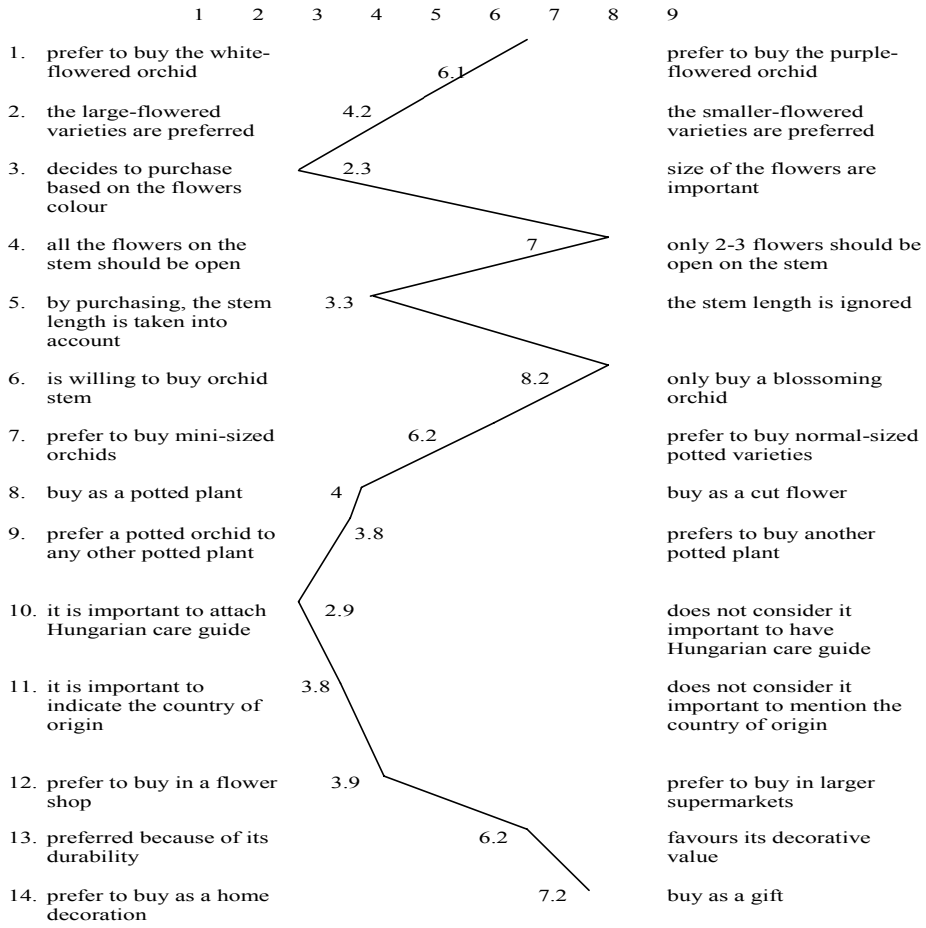


Fig. 1. Image profile examination of Moth orchid

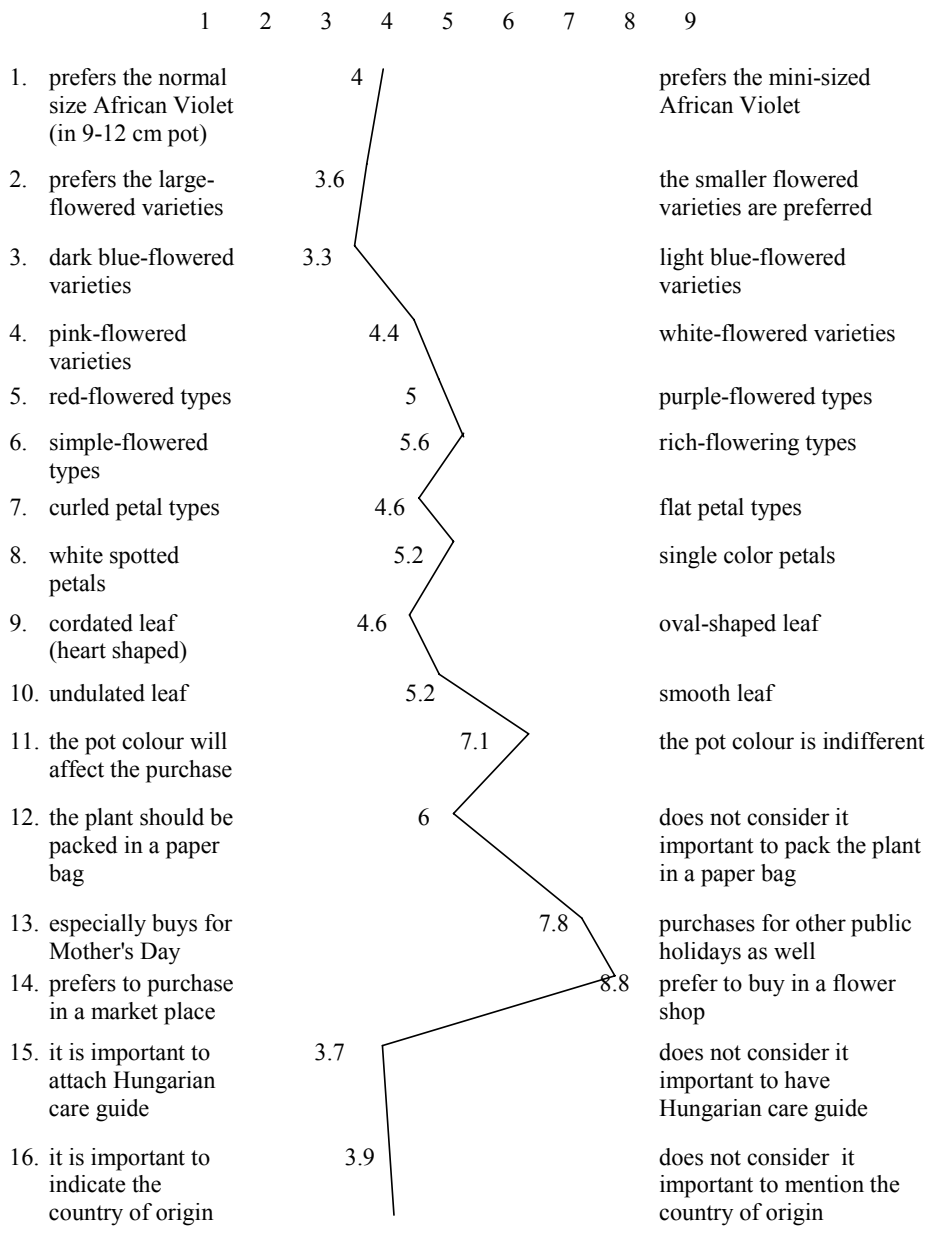


Fig. 2. Image profile examination of African Violet

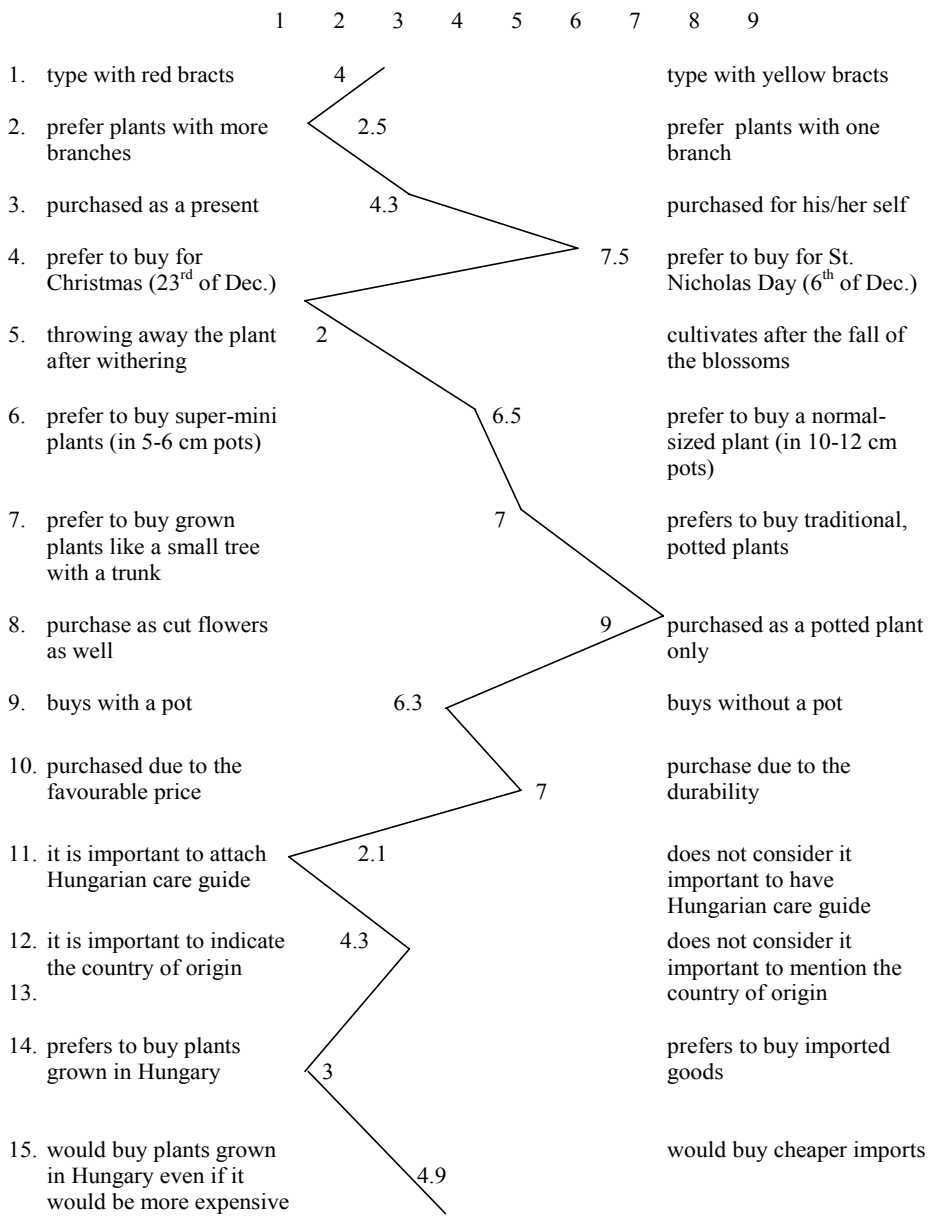


Fig. 3. Image profile examination of Poinsettia