

PROFILE AND BEHAVIOR OF THE BROMELIADS CONSUMER IN PARANÁ STATE - BRAZIL

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ABSTRACT

This study presents the result of a study about the profile and behavior of bromeliads consumers in Paraná State, which aimed to identify data related to the main reasons that make the consumer buy or not to buy bromeliads. For that, it was done an exploratory-descriptive survey from May 2008 to April 2011, aimed to people who usually bought flowers, but did not buy bromeliads, as well as people who usually bought bromeliads. The bromeliads consumption was done mostly by women (n = 88.7%) aged between 36 and 50 years, whose main reasons to buy them were the beauty of the flower (65.6%) and the flowers strength and durability (n = 32%). The economical class A and B represented the higher levels of consumption (n = 97%). The price considered high (n = 57.8%) and fear of the dengue mosquito were the main obstacles to expansion of the consumption.

Keywords: *trade, consumption profile, ornamental plants, bromeliaceae.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The commercial exploitation of bromeliads in Brazil started in the 70's and got great acceptance and consumer demand (ANACLETO et al., 2008; ANACLETO et al., 2009; NEGRELLE et al., 2012). Since then, the this trade is supplied largely by Veiling of Holambra, the largest commercial center of flowers in Brazil, which, in the years 1999 and 2000, moved the equivalent to R\$ 3,602,756.44 with the trade of this group of plants, which occupied the 8th place in the volume of income and sale (MARQUES et al., 2002). Nowadays the Brazilian production is close to two million bromeliads per year and this production is almost entirely concentrated in the States of São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro (ANACLETO and NEGRELLE, 2013).

Paraná market supply has always been made by plants from other regions or plants came from extraction (ANACLETO and NEGRELLE, 2009; NEGRELLE and ANACLETO, 2012), this situation occurred in part because the commercial exploitation of bromeliads in Paraná has received over the years few investments in order to established farming systems to meet the increasing demand (ANACLETO and NEGRELLE, 2013), which led

to a reversion of the cycle that denotes low production and high consumer acceptance (ANACLETO and NEGRELLE, 2008; NEGRELLE and ANACLETO, 2012).

The reversion of negative cycles can occur more easily, since they know the profile and the behavior of the consumers, according to Kotler and Keller (2012), this information become crucial to guide decisions since the scale of production up to the market shelves, adapting the offer to the specific target needs.

The collective behavior of consumers, therefore, can be defined as the set of reactions developed by them, the influences that have occurred in the process of buying or not to buy the desired product, as well as the decision-making forms that precede the consumption actions and the evaluation which happens after the consumption (KOTLER and KELLER, 2012).

The information of how the consumer thinks and what the consumer needs may help to define commercial competence of a product (EMATER-MG, 2008), estimating the potential sales volume, geographical areas with similar consumer groups, levels of knowledge about the product offered and the habits of purchasing similar products (KOTLER and KELLER, 2001) and it also allows to diagnose the trade influences of a given product and then organize strategic actions that can change the final consumer buying decisions.

The factors that influence consumer preference are unknown to the most of ornamental species, including bromeliads. So, from this point of view, are presented the results of the study that aimed to identify the main reasons that lead a consumer to buy bromeliads or not; the average of bromeliads consumption Paraná; if traditional seasonal periods such as Mother's day and Valentine's day influence the habit of buying bromeliads; if the consumer behavior is changed in function of economic class, age, income and gender.

2. MATERIAL AND METHODS

It was accomplished a descriptive-exploratory research and data collection was carried out from semi structured interviews (May 2008 to April 2011), and the sample was based on the population distribution in levels of income in accordance with "Critério Brasil" (CHALITA, 2003).

For better use planning, the field research shared consumer data collection of flowers in two groups:

2.1 Flower consumers who did not buy bromeliads

It was classified in this typology, people who buy any kind of flower, even if sporadically, but who never bought bromeliads, in this case, it was pursued to investigate the reasons why the bromeliads are deprecated in relation to other flowers.

Data collection according to Malhotra (2006) propose, at the end of the data collection it was totalized 1053 interviewed consumers in floricultures, when people were buying flowers or after purchasing, in 79 cities of Paraná State.

2.2 Consumers of bromeliads

It was classified in this typology, people who, according to Malhotra (2006) and Emater-MG (2008) bought bromeliads at least once in the last 12 months. It was tried to investigate consumers' profile and behavior, describing the reasons for purchase, preferential periods for the acquisition, favorite places to buy the flowers, intensity of buying and other factors of influence.

According to Malhotra (2006), the interviews were carried out from the visits to florists, when people were buying bromeliads and it was also requested to the attendants of these places that indicate people who had recently purchased these flowers.

It was interviewed 211 people face-to-face, in 51 cities.

3. RESULTS

3.1 Flower consumers who did not purchase bromeliads

The biggest part of respondents in this category (n=90.5% respondents) knew the bromeliads as an ornamental plant, regardless of income, age, geographic location in the state and gender (51.9% female and 48.1% male).

The consumption rejection was reported by 14% of the interviewed people and the reasons of the irreversibility of the rejection to the bromeliads in these cases were exposed in the following way: 2.5% of the respondents did not like flower indoors, 1.8% had small children at home and preventively do not have plants, 2.3% had domestic animals, 2.4% do not qualify the bromeliad as a beautiful flower and 5% had other reasons.

The main reasons for consumers prefer other species of flowers instead of bromeliads were:

- The price, considered high (n=57.8%) when compared to other species.
- The possibility of the presence of mosquito dengue (n=34.2%).
- The difficulty of finding bromeliads to buy (n=3.7%).

3.2 Consumers of bromeliads

The study showed that women were the majority among the consumers (n = 88.7%).

The average age was 42.2 years, and the age group that showed the highest percentage of consumption was between 36 and 50 years.

The main factor of influence on the consumption of bromeliads is the income. The classes A and B were responsible for 97.7% of consumption among the interviewees, and in other classes evaluated, consumption was incipient.

The regions where concentrated the largest volumes of purchasing in Paraná were Curitiba (n=25%), Londrina (n=16.5%), Cascavel (n=9.9%) and Maringá (n=9.4%).

The favorite place for consumers to buy bromeliads was the floriculture (n=58%), followed by stores specialized in gardening called garden centers (n=33%), supermarkets (n=24.1%), Ceasa (n=0.5%) and other places (n=4.2%).

Among the motivations that were described by the consumers to purchase bromeliads, they highlighted the beauty of the plant (n=65.6%), strength and durability of the flowers (n=32%), affordability (n=12.3%) and the facility of caring (n=8.5%).

The main purposes to buy bromeliads were the residences ornamentation (n=52.5%), garden ornamentation (n=31%) and office decoration (n=11.8%).

In relation to purchase at special times, it has been reported the mother's day (n=2.8%), birthday of important people (n=1.4%), father's day (n=0.9%), international women's day (n=0.9%), Christmas (n=0.9%) and Easter (n=0.5%).

Regarding to the frequency of purchasing, 0.9% of the consumers reported to be the first time that they made the acquisition. The same percentage was described for people who have the habit of buying weekly.

The biweekly purchase was performed by 1.4% of interviewees and 16.5% of them buy bromeliads monthly. The purchase in semi-annual periods was preferred by 74.1% of the respondents. The purchase accomplished once a year was said by 6.1% of the consumers.

The consumption could be expanded, in the respondents' point of view, if the following conditions occurred: more affordable prices comparing to the current levels (n=44%), if they knew how to take care properly of the plants (n=22.6%), if it was confirmed the information that the bromeliads in fact do not proliferate the dengue mosquito (n=18.4%), if it was easier to find places to buy (n=18.9%), and, if they remembered to buy more often (n=12.3%).

In addition to the traditional trade places, it was related by the interviewees as alternatives to extend the market of this species: gas stations (n=31,6%), decoration stores (n=34,4%), gift stores (n=20,3%) and 24 hours convenience places (n=24,1%).

4. DISCUSSION

The main reason for consumers preferred other species of flowers instead of bromeliads is initially related to the acquisition cost.

The price, according to Kotler and Keller (2012) in any economic activity is considered the first attractive to the consumer and can awaken the curiosity for the first purchase. The decision-making process for the first purchase depends intrinsically by the motivation that the consumer receives from the external environment and the perception that they may have had of the levels of influence in the satisfaction of their desire, and the situation created externally, will set the attitude of purchasing or not bromeliads.

The overcoming of consumer expectations in the first purchase can result in new acquisitions that, later, can be turned into purchase habit, in the case of bromeliads, the price is the strongest influence on the decision-making

process in not to buy, and one of the first obstacles to be overcome in raising the number of people who have the first experience of purchasing bromeliads.

Then, arises as the main tactic in the seduction of new customers of bromeliads, the offer of flowers in lowest price that is practiced, so that the consumer can meet other relevant qualities of bromeliads, especially second Anacleto and Negrelle (2010) the long durability of the inflorescences. In this way, the expansion of the market potential in relation to supply and demand may initially be changed from price, which would be a great incentive in the first acquisition. This tactic is called "strategy of new markets penetration" (KOTLER and KELLER, 2012) that can be applied in order to a fast insertion into the market, using the selling price to the final consumer lower than the normal price.

The use of this tactic is relevant, because the clients have at their disposal a infinity of products with similar functions, like other species of flowers, ornaments or even artificial flowers that are classified as substitutes, according to Kotler and Keller (2012), the consumers choose among this range of products offered, those which according to their values or the external influence, offer the best sense of gain.

As described by Negrelle and Anacleto (2012) the beauty of various species of bromeliads are visually attractive to the consumers and arouse attention from the other species, in front of the lowest price, arises by the customer, the curiosity by experimentation of the product.

The relevance of this influence is on the understanding that the satisfaction of the need or the desire held in satisfactory levels may focus in a new training cycle of desire for the same product. So, specifically in the case of bromeliads, the break of the resistance (factor price) of non-buyers in the first step of this cycle, can encourage consumers to create other benchmarks and get into the habit of purchasing this product.

The consumer satisfaction or not in relation to the price paid may interfere in future decisions and on the periodicity of new purchases, in this context, the consumers, almost all has with themselves an acceptable range of prices that they are ready to pay for the desired product, and according to Kotler and Keller (2012) are extremely sensitive to your changes.

Another issue to be analyzed in the process of consumer loyalty of bromeliads is the accessibility of information about the product purchased by this consumer. Ignorance about the product can break the decision-making process of buy, this condition is relevant, since a significant portion of respondents do not buy because they do not know how to take care of the bromeliads, which contrasts with the characteristics of this group of plant, which according to Negrelle and Anacleto (2012) and Anacleto and Negrelle (2013) are described as plants resistant to pests and diseases, and being easy to care in vases.

Still tied to the issues concerning information, consumers should have the information that bromeliads are not the preferred focus of dengue mosquito, and they should also know which are the practices to be adopted to fully eliminate the risk of insect proliferation like mosquitoes (SILVA et al., 2006; MARQUES and FORATTINI, 2008).

The adoption of shared strategies between the mass information associated to the sale reduced price can expand the existent demand, and can also increase the levels of recognition of the product by the consumer. In these cases, the sales force is directed in order to emphasize the competitive advantages of bromeliads against substitute products or competitors.

Undeniably, according to Kotler and Keller (2012) reducing the price associated to the media, resulting in expansion of consumption, but in the case of bromeliads, it must be considered that the price should be high enough to provide profit to the trader and the producer and low enough for the customer acceptance without depreciation of the product.

The total consumption of bromeliads has been practiced by people belonging to the economical classes A and B. The strategy to expand use of bromeliads can be concentrated in other economic classes, since, according to Paduan (2009), Todeschini and Solomon (2009), the consumption of products considered superfluous among them, the flowers, has been raised considerably in recent years in classes of lower purchasing power, especially the C class. It is estimated that on average 8% of the budget of this class, estimated at 554 billion reais per year, is destined to the superfluous consumption, such as ornamental products include bromeliads.

The trade of bromeliads in the class C is practically unexplored and could be an important source of market expansion. According to Rios (2010), the consumer of the economic class C in Paraná already consume the same things those people of classes A and B, but in larger intervals. Specifically in Paraná, the annual consumption growth of class C is 10% in the retail market, considered the best performance of the last 20 years, with strong expectation of growth (RIOS, 2010). So, there is a need for a reassessment of commercial strategies targeting, since, according to Todeschini and Solomon (2009), this social class is sensitive to impulse buying. Another relevant inference is the fact that this study report that most of the purchases of bromeliads is performed by women and, according to Chauvel and Mattos (2008), the low-income woman has an important role in the decision-making process of daily purchases.

According to Anacleto and Negrelle (2013), the marketing could maximize the commercialization of bromeliads in this segment, but this action must be performed by professionals who understand the behavior, habits, values and aspirations of this public (ANDERSON and MARKIDES, 2007; ROCK and SILVA, 2008), which requires different marketing strategies, little obvious and very creative. The concern is justified because, in the most of the cases, the responsible people for sales marketing are people of higher social classes than that described, and it is assumed that these people have different linguistic and intellectual formation of the class in which they want the expansion of consumption of bromeliads.

Decisions on tactics for insertion of bromeliads in this class should transcend simply the matter of price or offers. According to Canedo and Laban Neto (2008), the negotiations with class C should seek excellence in attending people, diversify the range of offers and train the employees, because the people who belong to this class, usually want to be respected, included and socially recognized and Cozer et al. (2003) argument that the flower trade must also have their symbolic and psychological meanings highlighted, which exceed the scale of value, not only for the class C consumer C, but for all the other ones.

The study of consumer behavior in the most of the time are focused only on the sales process, which, in addition to the financial resource it focuses on the variety of forces that shape it, in other words, a sequence of actions that includes the attractive offer of elements such as price, marketing and promotion, associated to aspects of the product quality, the physical appearance, the packaging and attractive label, all these influences affect consumer behavior, inhibiting or stimulating the purchase.

But it is necessary to consider other influences and not only those originated from the market process, people can be influenced directly by the various social groups to which they are entered as the family, culture and reference groups and the values assimilated by these reference groups, as described by Blackwell, Engel and Miniard (2006).

The relationship of values is assimilated in childhood, and the culture is predominant in terms of influencing the behavior of individuals in a society. According to Kotler and Keller (2012) culture is the sum of a set of values and behaviors shared by a society, and Blackwell, Engel and Miniard (2006) describe that culture demonstrates a lot of aspects as ideas, values and symbols that promote the communication among the members of the society which they participate, in this context, according to Cozer et al. (2003) includes the flowers and their meanings.

The social changes cause division in these large cultural groups, and the different groups are categorized as subcultures, in other words, segments within a culture who share values and distinct behavior patterns that differ from those which belong to the general culture. According to Blackwell, Engel and Miniard (2006), a person belongs to more than one subculture, so the degree to which each person is influenced and influences each subculture varies, and the general patterns do not apply uniformly to all the members.

The consumption of flowers could be changed if the influences of the social class and hierarchy in the individuals were well understood, in the groups that these people are inserted and classified in terms of purchasing power, and consumer habits, as well as in other situations related to the power exercised by the social references.

Individuals who belong to the same class, can share similar consumption behaviors, and the higher the importance of power exercised, greater influence on consumption of other social classes by reference groups.

According to Kotler and Keller (2012) the reference groups influence the thoughts, feelings and behaviors of other consumers directly or indirectly, that have tendency to imitate their attitudes and habits of consumption seeking socialization and as a result the post consumption satisfaction, so there is an urgent need in the case of bromeliads further studies that explain how the high consumption habit registered in classes A and B, could be transferred by these groups of references to the other social classes, since there is a gap in knowledge and also consumption.

In the psychological context, consumers in general are influenced by characteristics of the situation they experienced briefly as also described by Blackwell, Engel and Miniard (2006), specifically in the case of bromeliads, the performance of the sensory mechanisms can awaken the product sense of need, according to Kinard and Capella (2006) and Fiorelli (2007), the sensory factors can arouse or influence the psychological factors, resulting in the motivation of human behavior, this state of "motion" or "excitement" caused by motivation, is what drives the behavior in the direction of a target object.

Bromeliads have great capacity for sensory influence either by the scent of flowers, by their colorful inflorescences or texture of the leaves, these characteristics enhance the perception that combines the sensation with a meaning that previous experiences may have awarded.

The perception is a process by which is conferred some value to what individuals feel, so aroused by the sensory impressions, the perception according to Kinard and Capella (2006) transfuse in the individual a sense of pursuit for satisfaction and fulfillment of the individual add-on itself, the perception influences and adds sensory impressions by getting previous experiences influence on the current moment, resulting in the desire and motivation by sensorial repetition.

The perception allows the sense of completeness and continuity of the individual, in this way, according to Fiorelli (2007), objects and symbols constitute whole images, built from fragmentary stimuli collected by the sense organs. The feeling depends on, in science, of the stimulus and the ability of the individual to register it, and dependent on previous events involving the same stimulus, will affect the interpretation of sensation by the brain in search for repetition.

The behavior of the consumer post-perception is no longer a sequential of market composite and shall be classified as the forms of thoughts, the feelings and the actions, as well as the set of factors that affect them, and that determine the inner impulse to meet the need, the will and the desire of purchasing bromeliads.

In this way it is very important to understand the commercial spheres related to consumption, it is necessary that marketing professionals extend their limits and study the thoughts, feelings and actions of consumers, as well as the factors of influence on them, and what influences determine the changes in the patterns of consumer behavior, driving the market in the expansion of commercial demand of bromeliads in Paraná.

5. CONCLUSION

- 5.1 Women are the biggest consumers of bromeliads in Paraná (n=88.7%), and the beauty of the plant (n=65.6%), resistance and durability of flowers (n=32%) are the main reasons for the purchase of bromeliads.
- 5.2 The price, considered high (n=57.8%) and fear that the dengue mosquito can develop in bromeliads (n=34.2%) are conditions for consumption is not expanded.
- 5.3 The marketing targeted to economic class C can be strategic in the expansion of consumption of bromeliads in Paraná, it is recommended more and more researches about this approach for the insertion of the habit of buying in this social class.

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