Acceptance and preference for Winter Rose® Poinsettia (*Euphorbia pulcherrima* L.) used as cut flowers as affected by consumer demographics

Christine E.H. Coker**, Patricia R. Knight\(^1\), Benedict C. Posadas\(^3\), R. M. Ely\(^4\)

\(^{1}\)Associate Research and Extension Professor, Mississippi State University, Biloxi, MS, USA, \(^{2}\)Research Professor, Mississippi State University, Biloxi, MS, USA, \(^{3}\)Associate Extension and Research Professor, Mississippi State University, Biloxi, MS, USA, \(^{4}\)Research Associate, Mississippi State University, Biloxi, MS, USA

ABSTRACT

The Winter Rose® family of poinsettias (Paul Ecke Poinsettia Ranch) has been identified as a suitable poinsettia for use as a cut flower. With curly bracts that resemble rose petals, they may add welcome variety to florists' holiday repertoire. Winter Rose® poinsettias are now available in cultivars of varying colors. They are considered late-season poinsettias, requiring nine and a half weeks to mature and come into full color from cuttings. The objective of this study was to determine consumer preference for Winter Rose® poinsettia as a cut flower. Consumers preferred the cultivar Winter Rose® ‘Dark Red’ over ‘Deep Pink’, ‘White’, and ‘Marble’ in order of preference. Consumers indicated a willingness to pay approximately $14.00 for an arrangement consisting of six poinsettia stems.

KEYWORDS: Willingness to pay, previous purchases, floral arrangement

INTRODUCTION

There are more than 175 commercial varieties of poinsettias (*Euphorbia pulcherrima* L.), and dozens of new varieties are being introduced each year. Poinsettias generate $250 million per year in wholesale revenues nationally. They are also the biggest single holiday flowering crop, selling more than roses on Valentine’s Day or Easter lilies in the spring (Spence, 1999). Poinsettias are found in myriad colors including non-traditional hues such as purple, cranberry, dusty pink, mauve, and rich burgundy. Foliage may range from deep green to variegated with tints of green and gold.

Maximizing profits and sales potential are important objectives for growers and retailers. Sales potential is the amount consumers are willing to buy. Growers choose products based on retailer needs while retailers base their product needs on consumer demands. Knowledge of consumer purchasing characteristics is crucial for the development of risk and sales strategies that enhance profitability, market functionality, improved product quality, and price (Hinson et al., 2012).

Poinsettia as a cut flower is not a new idea. Previous research has shown that ‘Renaissance Red’, formerly known as Winter Rose® ‘Crimson’ made an excellent cut flower (Njue, 2003 and Njue et al., 2003). In fact, the Winter Rose® family of poinsettias (Paul Ecke Poinsettia Ranch) has been identified as a suitable poinsettia for use as a cut flower (Posadas et al., 2002; Coker et al., 2004). With curly bracts that resemble rose petals, they may add welcome variety to florists’ holiday repertoire. Winter Rose® poinsettias are now available in five cultivars which vary in color. They are considered late-season poinsettias, requiring nine and a half weeks to mature and come into full color from cuttings.

The objective of this study was to determine the suitability of Winter Rose® poinsettia as a cut flower crop by evaluating consumer preference and willingness to buy Winter Rose® poinsettia as a cut flower. Additionally, these results were evaluated through a demographic lens including respondents’ age (in years), gender, level of formal education completed (in years), household size (number of persons), and household income.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Four cultivars of Winter Rose® poinsettia (‘Dark Red’, ‘Deep Pink’, ‘White’, and ‘Marble’) were grown at the South
Mississippi Branch Station in Poplarville, MS according to standard cultural practices.

A single stem of each Winter Rose® cultivar as well as a six-stem arrangement of all four cultivars and the addition of Winter Rose® ‘Pink’, were presented to consumers attending the Coastal Aquaculture Unit’s annual open house in Gulfport, MS. Participants were asked to fill out a short preference survey (Appendix A). Consumer demographics were also collected.

Likert-type data (Boone and Boone, 2012) were collected and analyzed using Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) in SPSS. Demographic responses were evaluated using Chi-square analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Personal Preference

In a survey seeking consumer rankings on factors influencing plant choices, a University of Florida survey found plant quality was most important, while price and plant color were second and third, respectively (Khachatryan and Choi, 2014). Cultivar color preference was clearly shown by Coastal Mississippi residents for the four cultivars displayed. ‘Dark Red’ was rated highest with 6.06 (out of a maximum of 7.0). The next preference was ‘Deep Pink’ with an average rating of 4.57 and ‘Marble’ with a mean rating of 4.57. The least preferred cultivar was ‘White’ with a rating of 3.85 (Figure 1). Our results are consistent with the findings of Catanzaro and Bhatti (2006), they interviewed 293 respondents to rank different poinsettias cultivars as favorite based on personal preference and reported that red color cultivar was rated high as compared to other cultivars. Lubell and Brand (2017), also noticed that dark red flowers were favored by a large number of consumers.

The level of personal liking by residents of Coastal Mississippi for ‘Dark Red’, ‘Deep Pink’, ‘Marble’, and ‘White’ cultivars of displayed plants was not significantly influenced by their socioeconomic characteristics (Table 1).

In general, results indicated that ratings for ‘Dark Red’, ‘Deep Pink’, ‘Marble’, and ‘White’ were not affected by respondents’ age (in years), gender, level of formal education completed (in years), household size (number of persons), and household income. Female respondents were strongly attracted to the ‘Dark Red’ cultivar (Table 2).

Willingness to Pay for a Poinsettia Arrangement

Coastal Mississippi consumers were likely to purchase a poinsettia arrangement with an average likelihood of 5.42 (SD = 1.31). Females reported higher likelihood to purchase a poinsettia arrangement than male respondents. Overall, respondents’ willingness to pay for a six-stem arrangement averaged $14.00 (SD = $9.21).

The likelihood to purchase a poinsettia flower arrangement and willingness to pay for a six-stem arrangement were not influenced by the socioeconomic characteristics of Coastal Mississippi respondents. MANOVA results showed that respondent’s age (in years), gender, level of formal education completed (in years), household size (number of persons), and household income did not individually or jointly affect their preferences for poinsettia plants (Table 3). These results agree with Getter et al., (2013), who noticed that despite socioeconomic factors, more than 90% of consumers purchased poinsettias.
Poinsettias are widely produced in greenhouses across the country. Plants that may be culled because of broken stems may still have stems suitable for the floral trade. Overstocked plants could also be marketed to local florists. Selling poinsettias as cut flowers may provide supplemental income to producers for plants that may have otherwise been discarded.

Producing poinsettias exclusively for cut flower use is still a novel concept. However, continued research in consumer preferences and buying patterns coupled with expanded postharvest quality research my reveal a viable marketplace.

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REFERENCES


CONCLUSIONS

New poinsettia cultivars are released every year. Breeders and growers may very well be ahead of the marketplace as new cultivars make their way into retail centers. Even though consumers are eager to explore new cultivars, it has been well-documented that they continue to purchase red cultivars (Hansen, 2020).

Previous Poinsettia Purchases

Understanding ornamental customer demand starts with understanding how consumers make purchasing choices, to buy or not to buy, and the frequency of purchases. One important influence of a poinsettia buyer’s decision is aesthetic value (Palma et al., 2011). The number of poinsettias purchased in 2001 was not influenced by the socioeconomic characteristics of Coastal Mississippi residents. Results showed that respondent’s age (in years), gender, level of formal education completed (in years), household size (number of persons), and household income did not influence their purchases of poinsettia plants. Coastal Mississippi consumers reported that they bought an average of 4.06 (SD = 3.76) poinsettias in 2001 for use at home and given away as gifts (Figure 2).

The choice of colors was not influenced by respondent’s socioeconomic characteristics. Results indicated that respondent’s age (in years), gender, level of formal education completed (in years), household size (number of persons), and household income did not influence their choices of colors for poinsettia plants. The majority of the respondents (71%) bought red poinsettias in 2001 while 13% of the respondents bought pink and white poinsettias (Table 4). About 13% of all respondents did not purchase any poinsettia plants, 50% purchased only one color, 13% purchased two colors, and 9% purchased 3-4 colors.

Table 4: Frequency and distribution of respondents who bought poinsettias in the previous year for home use and as gifts based on plant color

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Red</th>
<th>Pink</th>
<th>White</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Did not buy</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bought</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CONCLUSIONS
APPENDIX A

Appendix A. Questionnaire Used During the Survey of Consumers’ Acceptance of Cut Winter Rose® Poinsettia

Please look at the poinsettias on display, identified as separate varieties by a letter on each vase. For each variety, please circle the number which indicates how much you personally like the displayed plant, representative of this variety. A response of 1 would indicate that you strongly dislike the poinsettia or a 7 would indicate that you strongly like the poinsettia. A rating of 4 means you neither strongly like nor strongly dislike the variety.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Poinsettia variety</th>
<th>Strongly do NOT LIKE this variety</th>
<th>Neither nor dislike the variety</th>
<th>Strongly LIKE this variety</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How likely would you be to purchase a poinsettia flower arrangement? **Please circle one number.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not likely</th>
<th>Neither</th>
<th>Very likely</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How much would you be willing to pay for a six-stem poinsettia arrangement, identified by the letter E? $ ______________

We would like to have some additional information about yourself. Your responses are anonymous and are very helpful to us when interpreting results.

How many poinsettias did you buy last year (2001) for your home and to give as gifts? ________ poinsettias

What color/s of poinsettia did you buy last year (2001)? Check all that apply:

- [ ] Red
- [ ] Pink
- [ ] White
- [ ] Other, specify _______________

In what year were you born? __________

Are you __________ male or __________ female?

How many years of formal education have you completed? (Ex. 12 years = High School Graduate) _____ years

Counting yourself, how many people live in your household? ______ persons

What is your approximate household income last year (2001) before taxes?

- [ ] less than $25,000
- [ ] $25,000 to $50,000
- [ ] $50,001 to $75,000
- [ ] $75,001 to $100,000
- [ ] more than $100,000

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME.