



Consumer Purchase Behaviour and Preferences for Ornamental Perennials: A Survey from the Małopolska Region, Poland

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INTRODUCTION & AIM

Consumer preferences and purchasing behaviours have been a key focus of marketing studies, with various factors influencing decision-making. While existing research has predominantly concentrated on cut flowers, potted plants, and nursery trees, there is a significant gap in studies focused on ornamental perennials. Despite their growing popularity, particularly among individual consumers and businesses involved in garden and landscape design, ornamental perennials remain under-researched.

The aim of this study was to assess consumer preferences and behaviour regarding the purchase of ornamental perennials in the Małopolska region of Poland, with a particular focus on different retail outlets.

Fot. 1. Ornamental Perennial Nursery Parchańscy, Poland

METHOD

A survey was conducted from July to September 2022.

Data were collected using direct survey in 20 locations across the Małopolska region: Kraków (over 100,000 inhabitants), Gorlice (up to 30,000 inhabitants), and four rural villages. Research was carried out at four retail outlets (garden centres, nurseries, florists, and DIY stores), with respondents being randomly selected customers planning to purchase plants.

The questionnaire, which included 15 closed-ended questions and a demographic section, focused on, among others, purchase frequency, plant preferences, and sources of plant information. A total of 202 verified surveys were included in the analysis.

CONCLUSION

The study highlights the significance of the retail outlet type and location, consumer gender and age, plant characteristics, and the increasing demand for environmentally friendly products in shaping the purchasing behaviour of consumers of ornamental perennials.

The findings indicate that understanding consumer preferences related to ornamental perennials is essential for producers and distributors in developing targeted marketing strategies. By tailoring product assortments to consumer needs and preferences, businesses can enhance market responsiveness and maximise profitability.

FUTURE WORK

As part of further research, the study area should be expanded and include a larger number of consumers to draw conclusions about trends for a broader region. An important aspect is also the analysis of consumer preferences and behaviours regarding online sales.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

- Consumers in Małopolska, regardless of gender and age, predominantly choose **specialist retail outlets**, such as ornamental plant nurseries and garden centres, for purchasing perennials. The main reason for these choices is the belief that the products offered are of very **high quality**, with the **largest selection of plants** and **expert advice available**.
In large cities with over 100,000 inhabitants, perennials are also frequently purchased in large retail stores, while in smaller towns (up to 30,000 inhabitants), florists are the most common point of sale, likely due to the higher frequency of these establishments in the surveyed areas.
- **Online purchases of perennials are rarely chosen**, as they prevent consumers from directly assessing the quality of plants or receiving expert advice, both of which are highly valued, especially by those with limited knowledge of plants. However, online advertising may influence consumers, particularly women, to purchase plants in physical retail outlets.
- **Consumers most often purchase perennials at the beginning of the growing season, during the peak gardening period.** Perennials are purchased more frequently throughout the year by women than by men, which may be related to greater interest among women in following lifestyle websites with garden design ideas or reading gardening magazines that provide information about new plants and encourage their purchase.
- **Price is not a major factor influencing consumers' choice** of retail outlet or the selection of plants with specific characteristics. However, the youngest and oldest consumers tend to prefer smaller, less expensive plants, likely due to financial status. Consumers with higher incomes are more willing to spend more for larger and more developed plants.
- **Preferences regarding the ornamental features of perennials vary significantly by gender.** Men focus on the decorative appeal of plants for most of the season, selecting those with decorative leaves, interesting fruits, and ground cover. They more frequently choose perennials with bold shapes—large, full flower clusters in the style of peonies or lilies, and in classic colours like white or red. Women prefer intensely flowering, fragrant plants with delicate structures and slim, narrow flower clusters, such as those found in woolly sage or daisy-like forms, particularly in white, pink, and purple shades.
- **Women are more likely than men to choose plants that promote biodiversity** and come in recycled packaging, as are the youngest and oldest consumers.
- The youngest and oldest consumer groups do not show clear preferences regarding the colour and preferred shape of flower clusters, unlike middle-aged consumers.
- **Popular perennials include well-known species such as echinacea, salvias, peonies, and daylilies.** Most consumers (77%), especially women and middle-aged individuals, would be very willing to purchase ornamental grasses, and slightly fewer (60%) would purchase garden ferns.