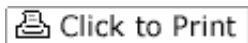




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&gt; Consumer Panel to Talk Floral Shopping

## Consumer Panel to Talk Floral Shopping

Sep 22, 2008 12:00 PM, By AMANDA BALTAZAR



Mother's Day and Valentine's Day are surefire occasions that get flowers out of your store and into coffee table vases. But that leaves 363 days when floral sales are sometimes not so hot.

The best way to find out how to capitalize on the remaining days is to ask everyday consumers. That's exactly what Steve Lutz, executive vice president of The Perishables Group, Chicago, will be doing at the Produce Marketing Association's Fresh Summit in Orlando, Fla.

Lutz will be moderating a panel of eight to 10 consumers, to take a look at when, why and how they make their floral purchases.

The session, "Creating Sales by Motivating Floral Consumers," on Saturday, Oct. 25, will look at consumers' distinct shopping patterns, said Lutz.

"We'll talk about what they like or dislike about different stores — the experience, the cost/value and the convenience," he said. "What causes a consumer to go to a floral store rather than a grocery store? It's not just about price," he pointed out.

The session will look at whether floral departments are a sales driver and whether they can cause consumers to change where they shop. It will examine how important service is, and how consumers compare the service they receive in a flower shop vs. a grocery store.

"What we're really trying to understand are shopping habits, beliefs and behaviors. We are looking at how the consumer makes in-store purchasing decisions and how this information can be applied to your business," said Lutz.

The consumers on the panel, who will all come from the Greater Orlando area, will be quizzed about their distinct shopping patterns. Lutz will ask them about such important factors as convenience, time, quality and customer service, as well as less obvious reasons for shopping a specific store, such as the packaging it uses, or the fact that its flowers are organic.

This session, Lutz explained, will provide grocery store operators with the chance to really listen to what's important to customers. "I imagine we'll get very different answers from men and women," he said, adding that the panel will be probably split 70% female and 30% male.

"My guess is that women buy more flowers than men, because they buy for themselves and their home and for non-holiday events and for friends. Men are very heavy holiday and special event shoppers."

Because of this, a strong focus of the session will be looking at what defines an everyday vs. a special occasion purchase.

Lutz will question the consumers on how they can be encouraged to buy flowers when there's no key event, and he will look at what triggers purchases.

He said the discussion will help session attendees understand how many floral purchases are impulse sales. "Any items associated with fresh food have a strong impulse part to them," he said. "Only the first-of-the-season items like daffodils and tulips might be planned, because people see them in ads, but it's mostly impulse sales."

A significant amount of the one-hour session will also look at what's happening to consumers' perceptions during the weakening economy. Floral spending is discretionary, Lutz explained, "so I'm sure we'll have some discussion about whether floral purchases will drop because of gas and food prices rising."

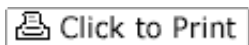
In addition to the consumer panel, floral attendees can take in a workshop on European floral trends on Friday, Oct. 24.

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