

Are Customers generally satisfied with their Floral Purchases Today? Yes

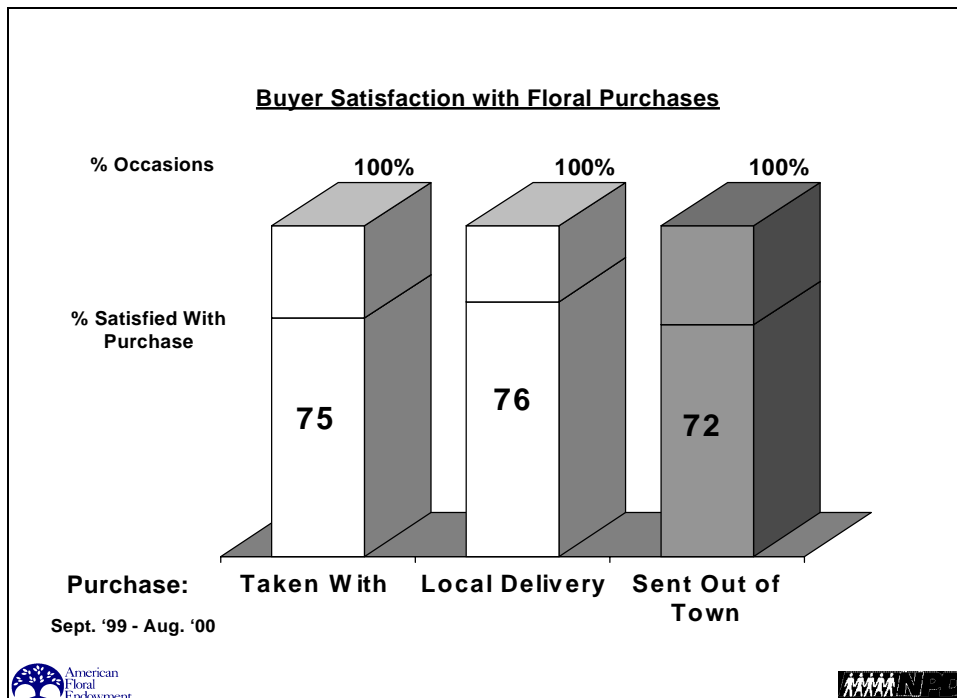
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Studies of Customer Satisfaction generally focus on customer perceptions of an experience. They become part of retailers' quality improvement programs since, in order to attract new customers and retain existing customers, a business must deliver a product and service that satisfies customers' needs and secures customer loyalty.

The American Floral Endowment Consumer Tracking Study monitors consumer's floral purchase behavior. Yet, there is one question in the survey that asks about the buyer's satisfaction with his/her purchase (satisfied or not). It is not intended to yield the depth of insight that would be obtained from a designed study of customer satisfaction -- which typically covers many attributes or levels of possible satisfaction. Still, it is unique in that the response is obtained *at the same time a purchase is made* -- rather than relying on one's perception through recall. For that reason, we believe it is worth sharing some findings from the AFE study here -- showing the extent general or overall satisfaction varies by product segment, by channel, by the intent of the purchase (gift/self) -- at the time a floral purchase is made.

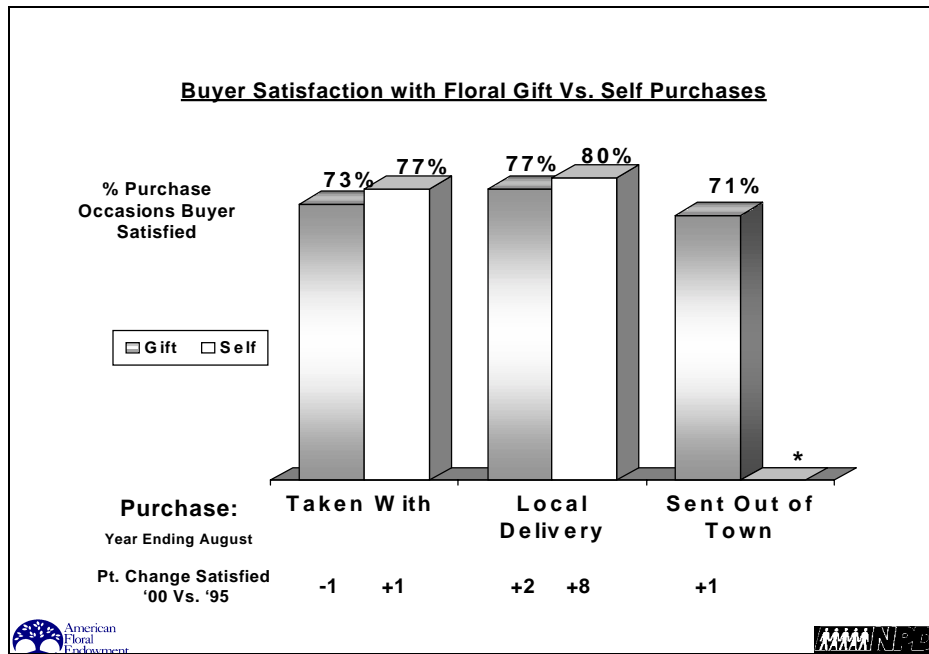
Buyers indicate that they are satisfied with their purchase on three of every four occasions. There is no real difference in their assessment between occasions when the purchase is taken with them from when it is delivered.

Chart 1



Buyers are somewhat more likely to be satisfied with floral products purchased for **Themselves** than they are when the purchase is intended as a **Gift**. Further, the percentage saying they were satisfied increased from levels reported in the past (1995 – a five year trend was selected for comparison) for Self intended purchases, while there was less or no increase in reported satisfaction on Gift purchases.

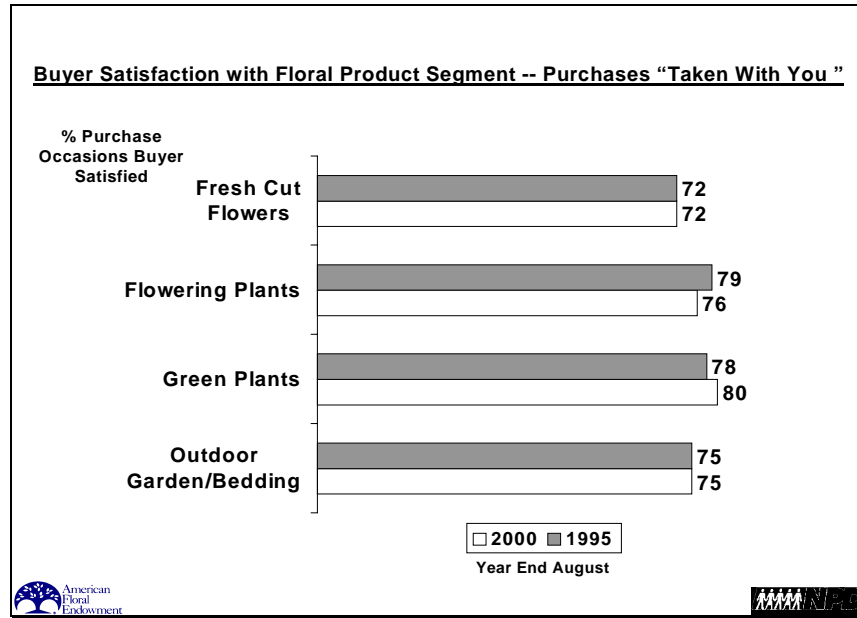
Chart 2



From here on, we'll address only those occasions when the buyer took the purchase with him/her. In these instances, we're certain they saw the product and could include that observation in their assessment of satisfaction.

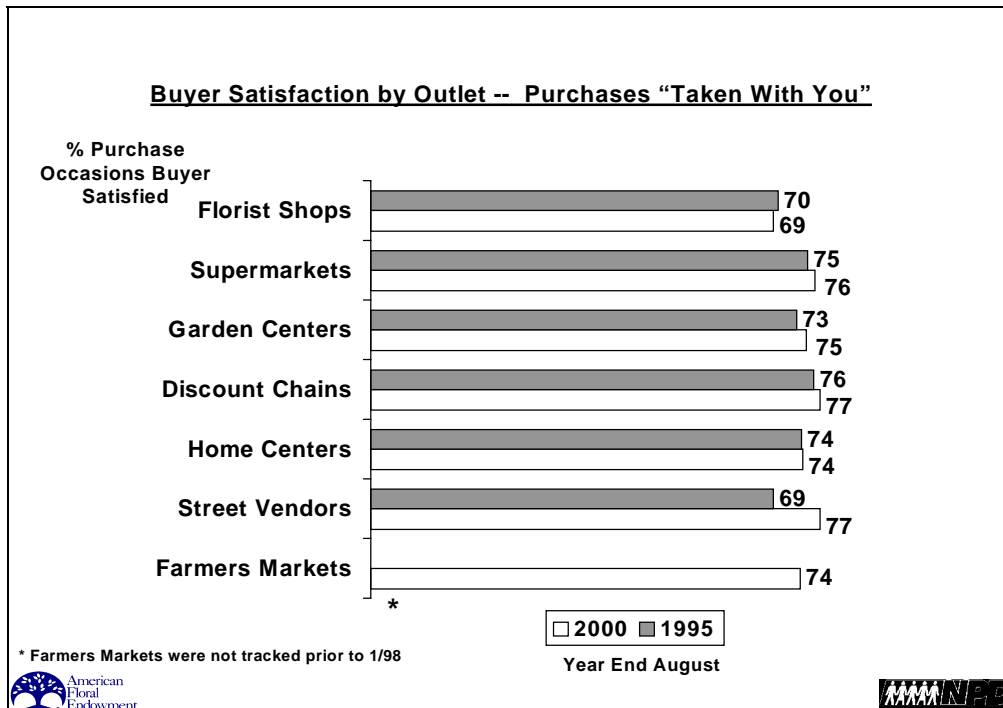
Perhaps the reason for the higher incidence of reporting satisfaction with a purchase for Self is revealed here where we see the responses by product segment. Buyers report somewhat higher levels of satisfaction when buying houseplants or outdoor bedding plants than they do when buying fresh cut flowers -- plants are more likely to be purchased for Self. This chart also helps to explain the increase in satisfaction from 1995 -- fresh cut flower buying has not kept pace with the buying trends for bedding plants, for example -- which are primarily purchased for Self. The comments, then, are weighted a bit more by bedding plant buying now than was the case in 1995.

Chart 3



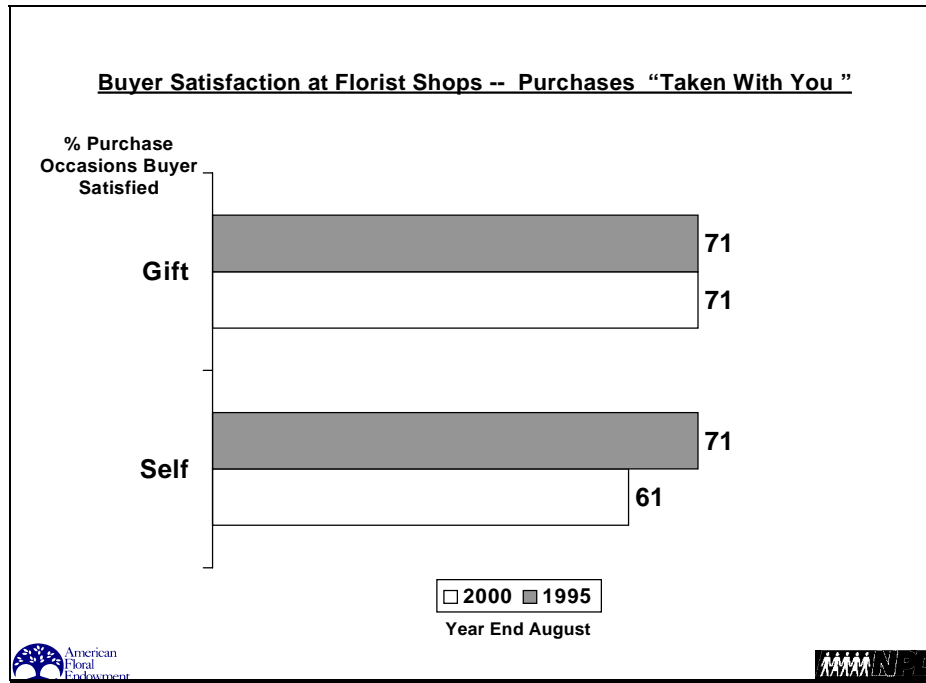
Another view on this subject is obtained by reading the satisfaction by **Outlet of Purchase**. Again staying with just those purchases "taken with you," customers tell us they are least likely to be satisfied with purchases made at **Florist Shops**. Further, the incidence of satisfaction increased from 1995 at Supermarkets, Garden Centers, Discount Chains, even Street Vendors -- but not Florist Shops:

Chart 4



The weakness from '95 in satisfaction with Florist Shop occasions is solely reflected in those purchases made for **Self**. Buyers reported being as satisfied with their **Gift** intended purchases this year as they were in 1995 (though the level remains below those seen when buying from other outlets).

Chart 5



In summary:

Remember, this is a very simplified assessment of satisfaction. The customer may be basing their response on the product itself, the service received, the price paid -- we cannot tell from this reading. However, it is unique to have this feedback at the time of purchase and a couple of findings are worth noting:

- Buyers are more likely to be satisfied with purchases for themselves than with their gift purchases. Perhaps expectations are not as high when buying for one's self as when the purchase is intended for a gift.
- Buyers are least satisfied with their fresh cut flower purchases – whether buying for themselves or buying a gift.
- Florist Shops receive the lowest percentage of occasions where the customer claims they are satisfied with their purchase.
- The indication of satisfaction with the floral product taken with at the time of purchase increased from the level reported in 1995 for four of the other five outlet types but did not increase for Florist Shops (it slipped slightly – not a significant change).

Retailers may wish to incorporate this learning into the structure of a more detailed analysis of customer satisfaction, which would enable them to quantify these differences and put steps in place to build on weaknesses found.