

BOOMERS  
BUY FOR  
TRADITIONAL  
OCCASIONS.

GEN Y WANTS 24/7  
ACCESSIBILITY

# WHO'S BUYING FLOWERS?

GEN X WANTS  
CONVENIENCE.

Groundbreaking consumer research shows a growing appreciation across generations for flowers and florists.

BY MARY WESTBROOK



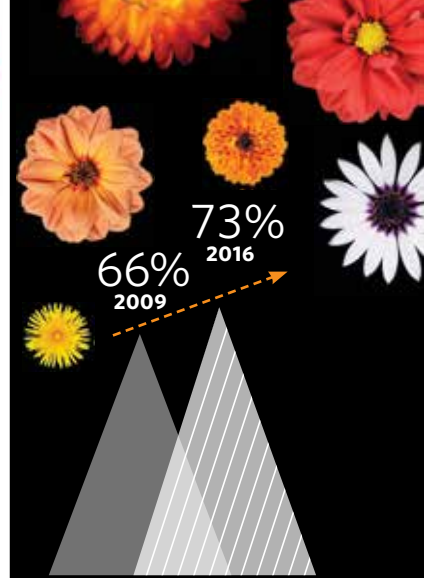
### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The 2016 Generations of Flowers Study was conducted using an online methodology. A total of 3,114 interviews have been conducted using a random sample of consumers drawn from leading market research survey panels. The data has been weighted to be balanced by gender, education and generation. The overall margin of error for each wave was +/- 2.4 percent, and 4.3 percent for each generational segment.

## READY FOR SOME GOOD NEWS?

Over the past seven years, the potential market for florists has grown significantly across three generations of consumers. From Millennials entering the workforce to Baby Boomers basking in or entering retirement, Americans today have an enhanced appreciation for flowers, fewer perceptions of cost barriers in flower purchasing and a growing awareness of the expertise of local florists.

Put another way: As you read this story, thousands of potential customers are out there ready to buy flowers, just waiting to hear about your business, while thousands of existing customers are ready to start buying from you more often, spending more money on floral gifts for special occasions and “just because” for their loved ones, their homes and themselves.

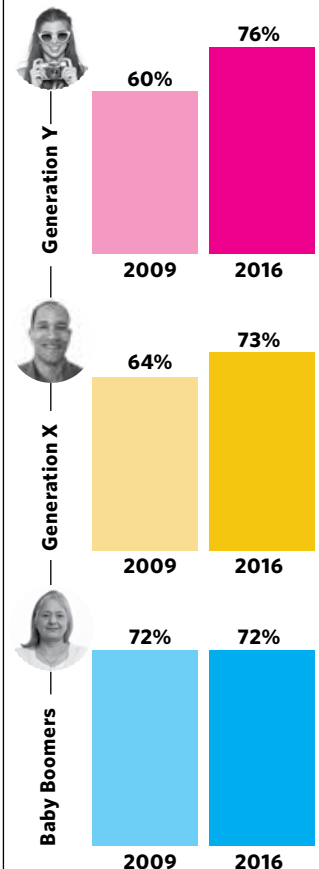


Total Respondents

### FEELING THE FLOWER LOVE

Overall, nearly three quarters of consumers have a strong appreciation of flowers, with this level of appreciation consistent across generations. There has been a positive shift in flower appreciation among Generations Y and X and among men and women, since 2009.

### FLOWER APPRECIATION



## We told you it was good news – and it comes from some serious research.

The 2016 Generations of Flowers Study, conducted by Russell Research in East Rutherford, New Jersey, is an update to the original Generations of Flowers Study by the Society of American Florists (SAF) in 2009. It explores consumer perceptions, motivations and barriers to buying flowers among three generations (Generation Y, also known as Millennials; Generation X; and Baby Boomers). SAF and the American Floral Endowment (AFE) worked in partnership on the 2016 study, with funding provided by the Floral Marketing Research Fund.

Taken together, the data show “considerable attitudinal and behavioral improvement from the 2009 research,” said Marc Goulet, vice president of client development at Russell Research.

In fact, according to the Generations study, 73 percent of consumers now have a high appreciation of flowers, a significant increase in appreciation compared to 2009 (66 percent). This increase was driven by much stronger appreciation among Generation Y (60 percent in 2009 compared to 76 percent in 2016) and Generation X (64 percent; 73 percent). Those positive shifts were seen in both men and women. (Appreciation has remained consistent among Baby Boomers, at 72 percent.)

For SAF Board Director Jo Buttram, AAF, of Shirley's Flowers & Gifts in Rogers, Arkansas, the results give reason to cheer, and present myriad opportunities for local retail florists.

“I cannot tell you how excited I am about this study and the percentages going in the right direction,” Buttram said. “The study shows that what we do every day as a florist makes a difference. Flowers touch people's lives like no other gift, and this study proves it.”

The study proves it — but the big question remains: What's a busy retail florist supposed to do with the information?

To help answer that question, we gave select SAF members and volunteer leaders a sneak peek at some of the study's key findings and asked them to weigh in on how florists can leverage this exciting information in the real world to reach more customers and grow their businesses.



There is power in gift giving.

**77%**

**OF WOMEN REMEMBER THE LAST TIME THEY RECEIVED FLOWERS AS A GIFT**

**50%**

**HAVE PURCHASED FLOWERS AS A GIFT FOR SOMEONE ELSE**

**2 IN 5**

**HAVE BOUGHT FLOWERS “JUST BECAUSE” FOR SOMEONE OR FOR HOME DECORATION.**



**Among gifts, flowers are special, and people who give flowers are seen in a positive light.**

Every year, in the run-up to Valentine's Day and Mother's Day, florists face a barrage of negative ads from non-floral competitors about the so-called drawbacks of floral gifts. (You know the drill: “Flowers die!” “Flowers are boring.”)

But sometimes a classic gift is classic for a reason — and the Generations study proves that flowers occupy a unique place in consumers' hearts and, importantly, their memories.

Nearly two-thirds of consumers said they feel special when receiving flowers as a gift, and 64 percent said they find flowers to be an emotional gift. In addition, 60 percent said they believe gifts of flowers have a special meaning unlike any other gift. These all represent increases over 2009 findings.

“There is power in gift giving,” said Goulet. “Eighty-nine percent of consumers remember the last time they gave someone flowers for a gift compared to a slight majority who remember the last time they were received. And women are more than twice as likely as men to remember the last time they received flowers (77 percent compared to 34 percent).”

Moreover, gifting continues to be the most common reason for purchasing flowers. The study found that 50 percent of consumers have purchased flowers for a traditional holiday/occasion gift for someone else in the past year, a finding that's very consistent across generations.



Gifted flowers from a local florist hold a higher emotional impact for the recipient.

Still, many consumers don't need a reason to buy flowers. Despite a decrease since 2009 (42 percent in 2016 vs. 49 percent), gifting as a "just because" is the second most popular purchase situation.

**WHAT IT MEANS**

Longtime florist and SAF Chairman Shirley Lyons, AAF, PFCI, of Dandelions Flowers and Gifts in Eugene, Oregon, said these findings make perfect sense.

"As retailers, we continue to hear and see the impact of flowers and these reactions lived out every day during deliveries," she said. "The human face, the look of delight and smile, the 'Oh, that's was so nice of them!' response."

One of Lyons' all-time favorite SAF marketing campaigns is centered on a photo of a beautiful

bouquet and the words "Instant delight."

"That's the message, right there," she said.

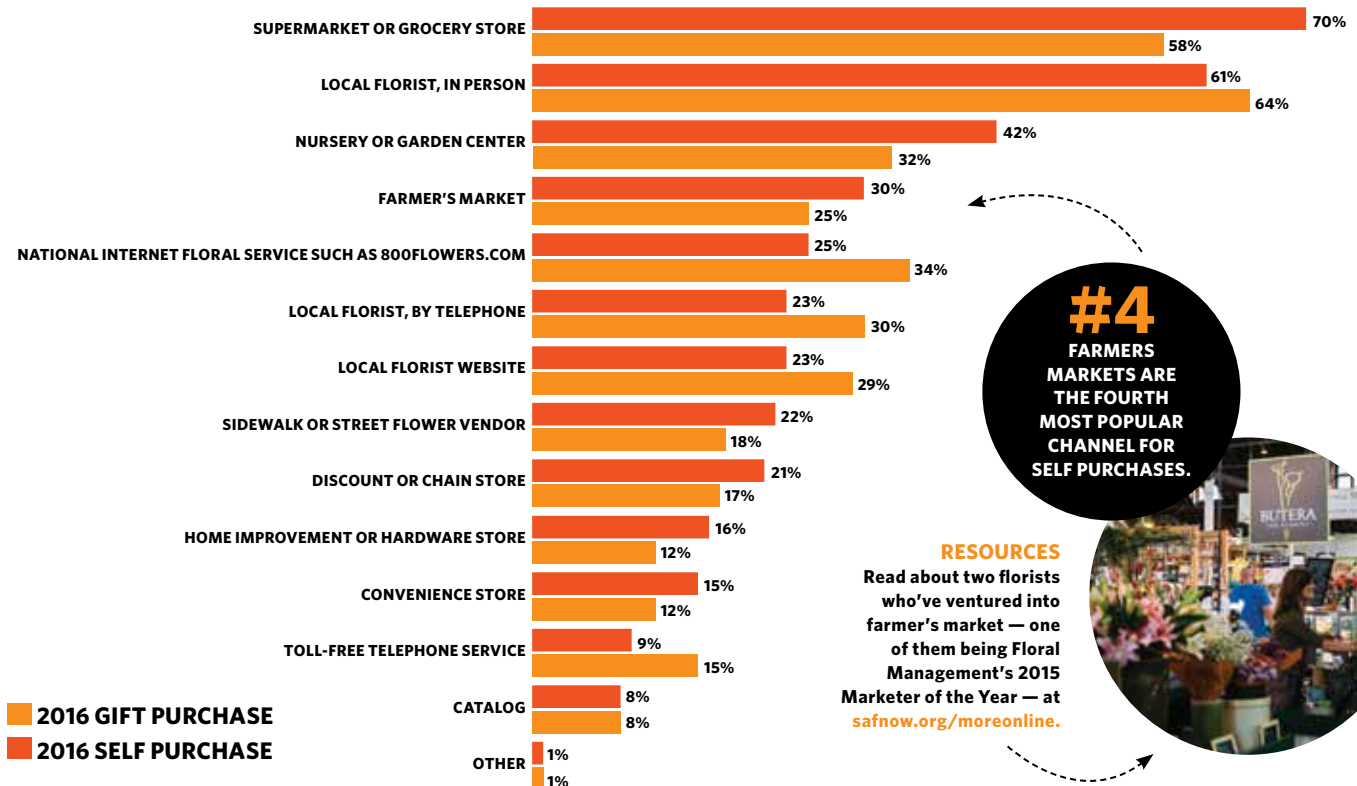
**PUT THE INFO TO WORK**

**Remind them.** Play up the "feel good" quotient of flowers with just a few words in social media posts and email campaigns. (Think: "Instant Delight.") Use photos, testimonials and reviews to convince potential gift-givers that flowers will set them apart in recipients' eyes and that people have a unique emotional connection to flowers. (One example: A blog post about the best card message you've taken or a short story about your shop's most poignant Mother's Day order.) Remind customers that "just because" is often the very best reason to stop by your shop.

**RESOURCES**

Order the Instant Delight materials at [safnow.org](http://safnow.org). Use the SAF-commissioned Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey's Emotional Impact of Flowers Study results to play up the "feel good" aspect of flowers. It shows that the presence of flowers triggers happy emotions, heightens feelings of life satisfaction and affects social behavior in a positive manner far beyond what is normally believed. [aboutflowers.com/research](http://aboutflowers.com/research).

**WHERE DO YOU BUY FLOWERS?**



Local florists are the most widely shopped channel for both self and gift purchases when in person, telephone and website purchases are considered (75 percent for self, 82 percent for gift), followed by supermarkets. Since 2009, farmer's markets, online and toll-free phone purchasing has increased, while discount/chain stores, local florists via phone and home improvement centers have declined.





### Outlet matters.

People love flowers and floral gifts. Terrific! But where do they buy them? Good question.

The study found that local florists remain the most widely shopped channel for floral gift purchasing, while supermarkets have declined in popularity. Eighty-two percent of consumers typically make gift purchases at local florists, including nearly two-thirds who shop in person.

In addition, 75 percent of consumers typically purchase flowers for themselves at local florists, near equal to 2009 findings. (Two in five, meanwhile, purchase at nursery or garden centers.)

"There has been a significant decrease for supermarkets, with 68 percent of consumers purchasing gift flowers there in 2009 compared to 58 percent in 2016," Goulet said, adding that the percent is higher for self purchases at supermarkets (70 percent), but still lower than the net percentage of purchases at florists in-person, online or via telephone, which is 82 percent for gift purchases and 75 percent for self purchases.

Both online outlets (including national floral services and local florist websites) and farmer's markets have risen in popularity since 2009. Indeed, farmer's markets are now the fourth most popular channel for self purchases, 25 percent in 2009 compared to 30 percent in 2016, driven by a sharp increase among Generation Y.

#### WHAT IT MEANS

As Lyons pointed out, the venue consumers choose often relates to the purpose of the purchase. Keep that in mind when you craft messages: Are they in a hurry and looking for a few stems to plunk in a vase, or looking for a gift that carries a higher emotional impact, one that

WHAT DOES A RESEARCH GUY LIKE GOULET READ AND WATCH IN HIS FREE TIME? FIND OUT ON PAGE 14.



Gifted flowers from a local florist hold a higher emotional impact for the recipient.

might be cheapened by a supermarket label? (The age of the consumer also affects outlet choice — keep reading for more on that.)

"Gifted flowers from a local florist hold a higher emotional impact for the recipient," Lyons said. "They aren't an 'Oh, I'm just dashing through the checkout line' purchase, and a recipient realizes that."

SAF Treasurer Chris Drummond, AAF, of Plaza Flowers in Philadelphia, cautions florists against reading too much into the supermarket decrease. If anything, he said his local markets have upped their floral game in recent years: "Many high-end supermarkets near me seem to provide good quality and value."

#### PUT THE INFO TO WORK

**Win them over.** Emphasize all that you do to make gifts from your flower shop truly special, from the unique flowers and designs to your packaging, sourcing, and care and handling practices, along with the tremendous resource of your trained, expert staff ("Not sure what she'll like? Tell us a bit about your girlfriend, and our design pros will match her style.") Go head-to-head on supermarkets with convenience by offering convenient grab-and-go selections and evoke the feel of a farmer's market with some "field-grown" designs. Or, try out a farmer's market booth or partnership yourself.

THERE HAS BEEN A SIGNIFICANT DECREASE FOR SUPERMARKET GIFT FLOWER SALES

68%  
2009

58%  
2016



### Know your audience.

Here's something that won't surprise you: Members of Generation Y, X and Baby Boomers think about flowers and floral gifts — and shop for them — differently.

The Generations study, however, debunks some common misconceptions about the generations, including the very idea that they're so completely different from each other. For instance, flower quality and freshness, getting what you expect and getting a good value for their money are the top three most important attributes overall and for all three generations when considering purchasing at a florist. In addition,

## RESOURCES

For tips on how to use Google and Facebook to target Gen Y, or any other segment of the population, visit [safnow.org/moreonline](http://safnow.org/moreonline).



**61%**

GEN Y

**54%**

GEN X

**43%**

BOOMERS

AVAILABILITY OF EXOTIC, UNUSUAL FLOWERS AT A FLORIST MATTERS TO ME

**74%**

GEN X

**67%**

GEN Y

**67%**

BOOMERS

AVAILABILITY OF ATTRACTIVE VASES, CONTAINERS AND PACKAGING AT A FLORIST MATTERS TO ME



“

Gen Y is notorious for shifting brand loyalty based on price, reviews, etc.

many of the generational differences seen in 2009 have narrowed in 2016, primarily due to increases in appreciation and connection among Generation Y. The primary areas of difference that remain between the generations revolve around channel usage and emotional connection.

### GEN Y: I Want it When I Want It.

The Generations study provides encouraging signs that the conventional wisdom about Gen Y — that they don't buy flowers and aren't interested in florists — is becoming outdated as Millennials, well, grow up.

Consider, for instance, that 55 percent of Gen Y respondents said they “buy flowers to make themselves feel better” and 50 percent said they “buy flowers on impulse.”

Reaching Gen Y means making flowers accessible 24/7 (55 percent). In addition, the most important attribute Gen Y wants from florists is the availability of unusual, exotic or hard-to-find flowers (61 percent). While in-person is the most widely preferred method across all generations, Gen Y is significantly more likely than other generations to prefer purchasing flowers online (34 percent vs. 25 percent Gen X, 24 percent Baby Boomers) and to consider the Internet for future purchases (44 percent vs. 38 percent Gen X, 32 percent Boomers). According to the study, Gen Y is also the group most likely to purchase flowers for themselves using local florist websites (28 percent vs. 25 percent Generation X, 15 percent Boomers).

### WHAT IT MEANS

To attract Gen Y, focus on impulse and accessibility, suggests Goulet.

“This generation values accessibility when shopping for flowers, using multiple channels, including social media for information, and are the segment most likely to buy on impulse.”

One caveat from Joe Barnes, manager of new business devel-



Three years ago in Austin, Texas, King Florist launched an expedited delivery service that allows customers to pay an additional fee for two-, three- or four-hour delivery (the fee starts at \$20 for a four-hour window [before noon]; \$30 for three hours and \$40 for two hours). Today, 25 to 30 percent of deliveries are expedited. Read more at [safnow.org/moreonline](http://safnow.org/moreonline).

opment at Kennicott Brothers Company in Chicago: Once you attract a Gen Y member, don't take him or her for granted.

“It bears mentioning that Gen Y is notorious for shifting brand loyalty based on price, reviews, etc.,” he pointed out. “They may buy on impulse, but they purportedly change their mind impulsively too.”

### PUT THE INFO TO WORK

**Wow them.** This generation is attracted to customization — they want to be different and unique — so in social media posts (hello, Gen Y-friendly Instagram, Twitter, Pinterest and Snapchat), play up unique blooms and personalization. Gen Y also tends to be “fast clickers,” meaning websites need to be organized, updated and optimized for mobile. As SAF Growers Council member Steve Register of Flores Ixtapan in Mexico said, the best way to “satisfy the preference for 24/7 availability” is an easy-to-use site that lets customers order exactly what they want in two minutes from their phone.

### GEN X: I Want Convenience.

If Generation Y wants to be able to reach you 24/7, Generation X (born 1965 to 1976) wants you to make their full, sometimes harried, lives a little easier.



**GIFTS**

**DELIVERING WHATEVER IT TAKES.**

**GLORY**

**SEEING YOUR BUSINESS BLOSSOM.**



**COMMERCIAL**

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**VAN SEASON**





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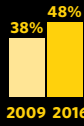
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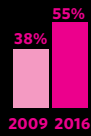
THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE GENERATIONS WHEN IT COMES TO WHAT THEY EXPECT FROM A FLORIST ARE NOT AS PRONOUNCED AS SOME THINK.

# WHAT I WANT FROM A FLORIST

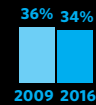
● GENERATION Y ● GENERATION X ● BABY BOOMERS



24/7  
ACCESSIBILITY



24/7  
ACCESSIBILITY



24/7  
ACCESSIBILITY



## GENERATION X AGES 40 - 51

Gen X is the most likely to require convenience (e.g. delivery options), use a florist, and purchase flowers for anniversaries.

FLORIST BARRIER:  
TOO EXPENSIVE  
35%

FLORIST BARRIER:  
TOO EXPENSIVE  
40%

## DELIVERY OPTIONS



2009 2016



## GENERATION Y AGES 22 - 39

Gen Y values accessibility when shopping for flowers (using multiple channels - including social media for info), and is the segment most likely to buy on impulse.

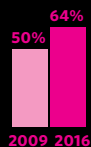
FLORIST BARRIER:  
TOO EXPENSIVE  
27%



## BABY BOOMERS AGES 52 - 70

Baby Boomers believe they have the highest appreciation for flowers and are more likely to purchase them for birthdays and funerals.

## DELIVERY OPTIONS

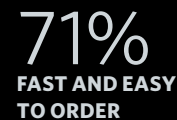


2009 2016

## DELIVERY OPTIONS



2009 2016



"This generation is the most likely to require convenience and has the highest incidence of purchasing flowers for anniversaries (41 percent) and 'just because' (54 percent)," said Goulet.

The study also found that Generation X is significantly more likely than other generations to consider purchasing flowers at a florist (67 percent vs. 61 percent Gen Y, 56 percent Baby Boomers).

Among Generation X respondents, 74 percent believe the color of flowers adds impact to a gift; 71 percent find it very important for a local florist to offer interesting designs/styles that make an impact, and 69 percent say it's critical to provide delivery options — making Gen X the group that most values delivery.

### WHAT IT MEANS

Convenience is king with Gen X, so "provide an omni-channel experience, which includes 24/7 accessibility through your website," said Goulet. "Delivery is widely important to the Gen X audience."

In addition to having that well-oiled website running smoothly day and night, Drummond said one way to better serve customers who crave convenience, and already are accustomed to the super fast turnaround of services such as Amazon's Prime Now, may be to extend business hours.

"We already open during the morning rush hour, starting at 7 a.m., and have recently seen marked improvement in sales before 8:30 a.m.," he said. "This study seems to point to an opportunity for retailers who are also accessible after 6 p.m."

### PUT THE INFO TO WORK

**Make life so, so easy.** When you talk to your Gen X base, play up the ways you save them time: delivery, gift reminders, cash-and-carry bouquets, knowledge of the local area, including rules and regulations at local hospitals and funeral homes. Remember, many Gen X customers who crave convenience are willing and able to pay for it.

### BOOMER: I Am Traditional.

Baby Boomers (1946 to 1964) have long been a reliable generation for florists — and, for the most part, they remain one, particularly when it comes to special occasions.

"This generation is more likely than other generations to purchase flowers for birthdays (55 percent) and funerals (30 percent)," Goulet said, adding that they seem to appreciate the emotional connection to flowers.

Compared to other generations, Boomers are far more likely to view those who give flowers as thoughtful (78 percent) and sincere (58 percent) — and as people who have taken the time to give something special (55 percent). Give a Boomer flowers, and they, more than Gens Y and X, will consider it a caring, personal and sentimental gift.

### WHAT IT MEANS

"We are old and remember the old ways — our mothers taught us well," said Boomer Lyons with a laugh, tongue firmly in cheek. "This information again helps us to create messages for those occasions in our marketing."

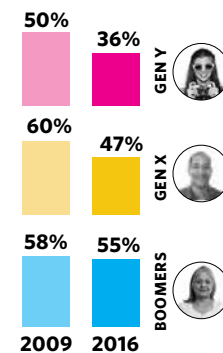
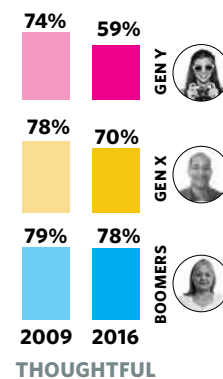
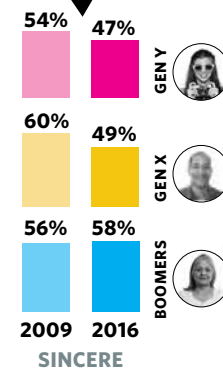
Barriers to purchase for this generation are that flowers "don't last very long" (54 percent) and they are "too expensive" (40 percent). Therefore, it makes sense that 82 percent said they find it very important for a local florist to offer flower quality and freshness.

Still, florists shouldn't take Boomers for granted: 77 percent said they buy flowers for themselves at supermarkets, an increase from 71 percent in 2009.

### PUT THE INFO TO WORK

**Make them feel special.** Compared to other generations, Boomers are far more likely to view floral gift giving as caring (63 percent vs. 46 percent Gen Y; 54 percent Gen X), personal (61 percent vs. 44 percent Gen Y, 56 percent Gen X), sentimental (53 percent vs. 42 percent Y, 51 percent X), and tasteful (52 percent vs. 31 percent Y, 45 percent X). Reinforce those ideas with marketing that emphasizing the emotional connection both senders and recipients feel, and the role flowers have long played in celebrations. (Think: incorporating tulips into a 50th anniversary arrangement or party centerpieces because the flowers were prominent in the wife's bridal bouquet.) To underscore longevity and value, and push back against those barriers to purchase, emphasize your shop's top-notch care and handling and wide selection of potted plants. (The study has more to say about plants, by the way ... keep reading.)

**SCORE BROWNIE POINTS WITH GRANDMA**  
Boomers' regard for flower givers as thoughtful and sincere has held steady, while these associations have decreased among Gens Y and X.



**SOMEONE WHO TAKES THE TIME TO GIVE SOMETHING SPECIAL**





### Customers want to see, touch and smell flowers.

Every florist has seen this happen: A customer walks in the door, delights in the sight of flowers and then leans in to smell a blossom only to inhale — nothing. That moment of lost delight is an opportunity, according to the study.

Over the years, some commercial flowers have “lost” their scent, as breeders prioritized other attractive qualities, including longer vase life. But to 62 percent of customers surveyed in the study, fragrance matters.

In addition, 70 percent of consumers strongly agree the color of flowers adds to the impact of a gift, and 69 percent said “the sight and smell [of flowers] can improve my mood.”

#### WHAT IT MEANS

Fragrant flowers still exist, of course, and the options are increasing, said Jose Azout of Alexandra Farms, a company that grows a number of fragrant garden rose varieties.

“When the roses actually have a scent, the thrill is evident in the person’s face,” he said. “Fragrances a big differentiator between the garden roses we sell and regular greenhouse roses, and is certainly part of the appeal.”

#### PUT THE INFO TO WORK

**Talk to the senses.** Train your staff to talk in terms of sensory experiences to customers, particularly over the phone. Come up with a list of descriptions ahead of time that offer clients a better visual or sensory experience (Pale blue? No! Robin’s egg blue).

Check out some highly scented new lily varieties in this month’s Fresh Choices on p. 16. (Really want to feel inspired? Come to SAF Maui 2016, SAF’s annual convention Sept. 21-24, and visit the association’s annual Outstanding Varieties competition.)

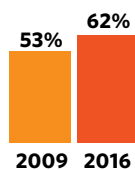


When the roses actually have a scent, the thrill is evident in the person’s face.



**70%**

**OF CONSUMERS AGREE THE COLOR OF FLOWERS ADDS TO THE IMPACT OF A GIFT**



**FLOWER FRAGRANCE IS IMPORTANT TO ME**



#### RESOURCES

Lilies are sure to please those looking for fragrance (see Fresh Choices, p. 16) but check out past Fresh Choices columns that have featured famously fragrant blooms, [safnow.org/moreonline](http://safnow.org/moreonline).



### Cost is not a big purchase barrier.

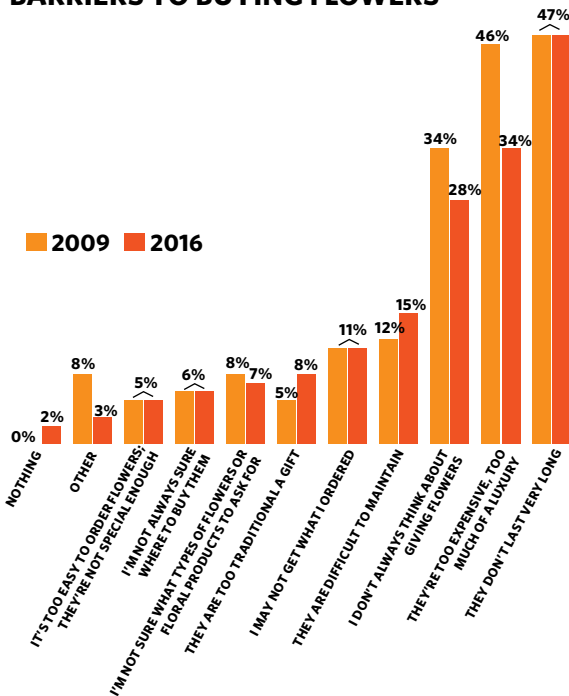
The study found that fewer consumers see flowers as a luxury they need to cut from their budget.

“There has been a significant decrease in the percentage of consumers who identified flowers as too expensive/a luxury as a barrier to purchasing more often (46 percent in 2009, compared to 34 percent in 2016),” said Goulet.

Indeed, consumers are spending more on flowers for themselves and their homes. Two in five consumers have purchased flowers in the past year for home decoration, and more than one-fifth purchased them as a present for themselves. (Here again, these areas have both increased as reasons among Generation Y.)

Those who purchase flowers for home decoration are equally likely to buy them for everyday décor (42 percent), a personal pick-me-up (41 percent), or holiday décor (39 percent).

#### BARRIERS TO BUYING FLOWERS



“

There has been a significant decrease in the percentage of consumers who identified flowers as too expensive/a luxury as a barrier to purchasing.

**WHAT IT MEANS**

According to Register, these findings provide “a compelling case that our focus needs to be on ensuring that our customers’ expectations are met or exceeded on each purchase in order to build upon this momentum,” he said. “Price being less of a barrier does not give us the green light on raising prices; that would be a very serious mistake. Instead, the opportunity is to increase floral consumption.”

Goulet agreed. “Providing a good value for the money and being affordable were both identified as cost of entry attributes,” he said. (In other words, he explained “these are the attributes which must be met in order to be placed within consumer consideration.”)

**PUT THE INFO TO WORK**

**Inspire them.** Remind customers what an affordable luxury flowers can be by sharing “beautiful spreads in glossy shelter magazines and on lifestyle blogs that reinforce the message that flowers are an essential part of home décor,” suggested Lyons. “We appreciate the value that those publications have shown in enhancing spaces with flowers to maximize beauty and tranquility.” Remind customers regularly, online and through signage, what’s new and what’s special, she said and tailor some messages to self-purchases: “Treat yourself!”

# WHO IS YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA MANAGER?



**Her Resume:**

- She has close to 3k friends on her personal **FACEBOOK**
- 400 followers on her **TWITTER**
- She's *not active* on **GOOGLE+**
- Calls in “sick” often
- She has **NO** floral experience
- You pay her about \$400/wk. (\$10/hr)



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### Local roots matter.

Local florists are clearly part of the local community — and that's something that matters to consumers across generations.

The study found that 60 percent of consumers identify being a locally owned business as very important when considering a flower purchase at a florist.

#### WHAT IT MEANS

"Being a locally owned business is a hidden opportunity for florists, and being involved in the community reinforces this association," Goulet said. "This was among the least widely important attributes. However, when using driver analysis to identify key motivators of florist consideration, locally owned was the most important driver and providing expert recommendations was second most important."

Drummond said the number of consumers claiming to value local businesses took him by surprise. "It seems that many people are willing to click that 'too-good-to-be-true' offer in their inbox or on a web banner ad, regardless of whether or not the merchant is a local florist," he said.

Still, even if they do click on those national company offers, they may well come back to the local company, said SAF Retailers Council Member Michael Pugh of Pugh's Flowers in Memphis, who sees more "younger buyers coming back to the traditional retailer, often voicing displeasure at online-only flower vendors and asking or verifying that we are local and brick and mortar," he said.

#### PUT THE INFO TO WORK

**Stay in front of them.** Assert your local credentials by promoting partnerships with local civic groups and charities, along with any area awards or best-of recognition you receive. One simple change Pugh has made over the past few years is to make sure that the shop's local addresses and phone number appear in all promotional materials. At Dandelions, Lyons and her staff now follow up with all incoming corporate orders that

“

Being a locally owned business is a hidden opportunity for florists, and being involved in the community reinforces this association.

60%

AGREE LOCALLY OWNED COUNTS



46%

OVERALL

51%

GEN Y

46%

GEN X

39%

BOOMERS

WHO PLANS TO BUY HOUSEPLANTS IN THE NEXT 6 MONTHS?

arrive via national brand or ordering house. "We have our corporate salesperson call on them to educate the value of using ourselves instead," she said. "We emphasize our personal service, ease of website navigation, billing and guarantees, all at the same costs."



### Houseplants are hip.

Nearly one-half of consumers (46 percent) plan to purchase houseplants in the next six months, significantly higher than intent found in 2009 (37 percent). This increase was driven by Generations Y (51 percent, compared to 33 percent in 2009) & X (46 percent, compared to 33 percent previously).

Baby Boomers are slightly less likely to purchase houseplants compared to 2009. Why? "Been there done that, maybe," suggested Lyons. "Perhaps Baby Boomers like me want to travel and don't want to be tied down to plant care."

"Consideration of houseplants is on the rise among Generations Y and X, complementing consumer usage of flowers for everyday décor in the home," Goulet said,

#### WHAT IT MEANS

The big challenge? "Florists are not the most widely shopped channel for houseplants," he acknowledged. (That's nursery and garden centers, 39 percent compared to 46 percent in 2009.) "Communication and promotion of houseplants would likely be necessary for florists to become the top-of-mind option.

#### PUT THE INFO TO WORK

**Spread the word.** "Nearly half of consumers plan on purchasing a houseplant in the next six months?" said Buttram. "Let's go get their business." Promote your plant offerings online and in-store with compelling visual displays and packaging the big boxes don't offer. Accentuate plants that are on-trend and all over those glossy magazines and lifestyle blogs (e.g. succulents). "Go for the clean-living aspect" that appeals to so many consumers seeking to tidy up and streamline their lives, suggested Buttram.

FIND OUT WHAT KIND OF SKIN GOULET HAS IN THE FLOWER BUYING GAME ON P. 6.



46%

OF CONSUMERS WANT TO RECEIVE INFORMATION AND TRENDS ABOUT FLOWERS FROM THEIR FRIENDS AND FAMILY

### Word-of-mouth is your friend.

When it comes to reeling in new customers, your best asset may be your existing fans, and everyone they talk to in person and online.

The Generations study found that 46 percent of consumers want to receive information and trends about flowers from their friends and family. Consumers also cited TV (34 percent), email (28 percent) personal discussions with florists/experts (27 percent) and social media (25 percent) as great information resources. In fact, social media holds the number two spot for Gen Y (32 percent).

#### WHAT IT MEANS

Help direct the conversations people are having about your shop with the help of “shareable” experiences and content, content, content.

“There’s content opportunity for social media in the form of blog posts, Pinterest pages, or YouTube videos, as well as creating florist recommendations within the in-store and online retail spaces,” Goulet explained. (See how Tiger Lily Florist in Charleston created a series of online videos for Mother’s Day 2015 at [safnow.org/moreonline](http://safnow.org/moreonline).) Kate, I’m thinking about the Mother’s Day videos here.

In Memphis, Pugh says he uses social media to not only display products but also to humanize the business; the shop regularly posts photos of team members with a brief description of their job at the business. “We showcase our employees and community events to give the customer and potential customers a more ‘365’ experience when dealing with us,” Pugh said.

#### PUT THE INFO TO WORK

**Get them talking.** Public relations can be your best friend when you want to generate great word-of-mouth on a budget. That’s what SAF Retailers Council Member Bridget Carlson of Ashland Addison Florist Company in Chicago did when she participated earlier this year in SAF’s Petal It



Forward, a feel-good initiative that put free flowers in the hands of consumers and encouraged them to share the love with others by passing on a second bouquet. The Ashland Addison team handed out flowers during rush hour at busy hubs around the city and ended up on several local news broadcasts throughout the day. “That is the perfect outreach,” said Carlson, who had been doing similar give-aways, under a different name, for years in Chicago before the SAF effort. “It’s tangible, it’s fresh, it’s local, it’s raw and it’s real.” In terms of social media, look at every post as a “shareable post,” by including appropriate hashtags and adding a watermark to images, to ID your shop. And remember, said SAF CIO Renato Sogueco, consumers pay attention to your online reputation, so respond to every review on Yelp, Google and similar services — the good, the bad and the neutral. (Sogueco shared tips on verbiage to use when responding to negative reviews last month during SAF’s One-Day Profit Blast in Cincinnati. Download his presentation, read about Petal It Forward and peruse SAF’s PR Boot Camp at [safnow.org/moreonline](http://safnow.org/moreonline).)

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#### WANT TO KNOW MORE?

Floral industry members can access the full study analysis at [safnow.org/GenerationsStudy](http://safnow.org/GenerationsStudy).

Marc Goulet of Russell Research in East Rutherford, New Jersey, will be leading, an SAF webinar on the research study, on Wednesday, June 29, 1 p.m. EDT. Find out more and register today at [safnow.org](http://safnow.org).

