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# **YOUNG FAMILIES AS BUYERS OF HORTICULTURAL PRODUCTS**

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# **YOUNG FAMILIES AS BUYERS OF HORTICULTURAL PRODUCTS**

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## ***Introduction***

Often, the well-funded buyers of horticultural products are more than 60 years old and thus it is quite obvious that this customer group will only buy and demand the respective products for a limited time period. Therefore, it is essential for retail trade nurseries – which are continuously losing market shares in favour of Do-It-Yourself-stores, garden centres and food retailers – to search in time for younger customers in order to sell them plants and other horticultural products for a longer time period. At least part of the target group “young family” earns high household net incomes, is often underrepresented among the buyers of horticultural products and offers high potentials for future sales not least since the families often influence their children’s prospective consumption behaviour.

## ***Material and Methods***

Data for the diploma thesis was generated via a standardised questionnaire consisting of 17 questions which has been distributed to 1,000 households within the urban area of Munich and in the rural districts of Rosenheim and Lindau/Bodensee in summer 2006. Those chosen households had to give indications for children, or otherwise data from the Federal Statistical Office of Bavaria had been used in order to find appropriate households. Statistical distribution of 223 answered questionnaires could be calculated by the use of the statistical program SPSS. Among the returned questionnaires 85% belong to the selected target group “young family”.

## ***Results***

Young families have a keen interest in using their garden for recovery, as a playground for their children or for celebrating with friends. Obviously, there is a desired high demand in horticultural products. Those are mainly bought in garden centres, retail trade nurseries or DIY-stores, which are favoured especially for special offers. Mainly 31 to 40 year-old women with an average household consisting of four persons frequently buy horticultural products for about 100€ to 300€ per year. Young families demand high quality products, friendly and competent consulting, a wide selection of plants and other horticultural products, as well as a reasonable price-performance ratio and enough parking sites. Very good plant quality can be primarily found in retail trade nurseries and in garden centres, both also turned out to provide friendly personnel and expert consulting. Retail trade nurseries already fulfil most of the customer needs, but prices are too high and opening hours are not appropriate. In DIY-stores however, customers are less satisfied with the product quality, but more content with the price-performance ratio. Still, half of the respondents have to queue too long there, cannot find qualified personnel and if so, they are unfriendly. Families that are shopping together with their children wish to find a playground or at least a kid’s corner. Child care can at present only be found in retail trade nurseries. Family-specific criteria such as an ideal routing within the store, long and family-friendly opening hours especially at weekends can already be found in garden centres and DIY-stores. While one third perceives the shopping atmosphere in garden centres and retail trade nurseries as very satisfying, friendliness and high availability of personnel can mainly be found in retail trade nurseries.

## ***Conclusion***

Polled families possess an over-average purchasing power, are highly interested in gardening and plants and will by reason of young age be potential buyers for a long time - as opposed to many elderly persons interested in horticultural products.

Therefore, purchasing together with one’s children should become as barrier-free as possible which might implicate changes in the range of products, marketing, paths (length, broadness), family-friendly opening hours, queue times and articles for sale at the paying desk, the existence of car parks and the availability of child care.

Aware of the shopping habits, behaviour, preferences and needs of young families, adjusted marketing measures can provide forward-looking support and ensure a successful continuity of the business companies.