

MEAT PROCESSORS
CUSTOMER SATISFACTION
RESEARCH RESULTS

2018



Meat Processors Customer Satisfaction Research Project Results 2018



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Project Background

This inaugural research project was conducted by the Minnesota Grown Program at the Minnesota Department of Agriculture in early 2018. Customers were surveyed about their experiences and opinions as customers of one of the **7 participating meat processors** across Minnesota, the equivalent of **40% of all meat processors** in the Minnesota Grown Program. A total of **1,107 customers returned surveys!**

Meat processors eligible for this project were Minnesota Grown members and qualified meat processors in Minnesota who market directly to the end consumer and were recruited through various means including:

- Articles in Member Update, a monthly newsletter for Minnesota Grown Program members
- Articles in the Minnesota Association of Meat Processors newsletters
- Calls to meat processors to ensure awareness of the opportunity
- Conversations and presentations at association conferences and trade shows
- Emails sent directly to Minnesota Grown members
- Emails via listserves, such as SustAg, etc.
- Word of mouth

The Basics

7 participating meat processors

= 40% of all meat processors in the Minnesota Grown Program

A total of 1,107 customers returned surveys.



Help us improve & enter to win a \$25 credit!

Tell us about your experience with **[business name]** by taking an online survey.

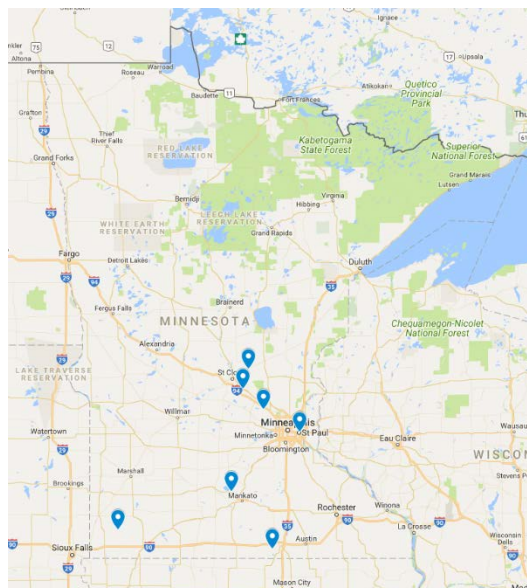
Take the survey at **[URL]** and thank you!



Customers received cards, like the one above, with their meat orders. Every meat processor had a unique URL to direct customers to their online survey. Customers then answered a series of survey questions. The survey was voluntary. A \$25 credit incentive per meat processor was offered and one winner per processor was selected at random. This report is a summary of their feedback across all processors surveyed.

Meat Processor Profile

The majority of the meat processors have 20+ years of experience and included a mix of types of meat processors throughout Minnesota.



- Nearly all of the meat processors had 20+ years of experience. One processor had between three to five years of experiences.
- The study includes USDA inspected (2), MDA inspected equal to USDA (2), and MDA licensed exempt (3) meat processors.

Customer Age Comparisons ([based on past customer research](#))

This is one of eight studies making up a family of customer satisfaction projects. The projects include apple, berry, Christmas tree growers, farmers markets, CSAs, livestock producers, meat processors, and garden centers.

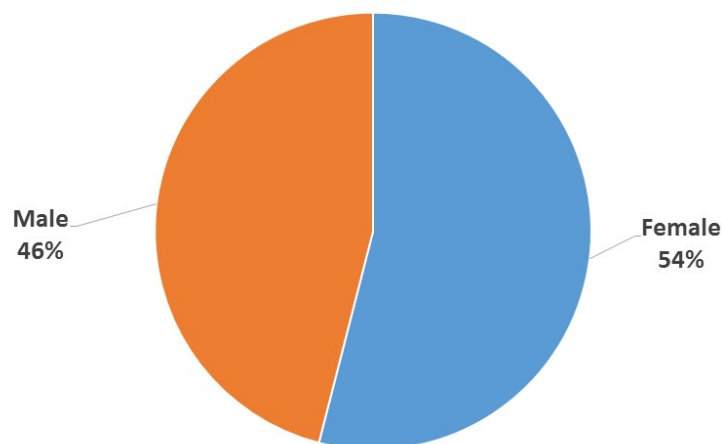
The research measures customer satisfaction to assist direct market farms, growers/producers, processors, and farmers markets statewide in better serving their customers. The information provided assists all in becoming more effective marketers, understanding customers better, and improving services and sales.

Other surveys have given us the opportunity to consider the average age of customers for various products. Meat processor customers are one of the older groups of customers in comparison to other locally grown items we've studied.

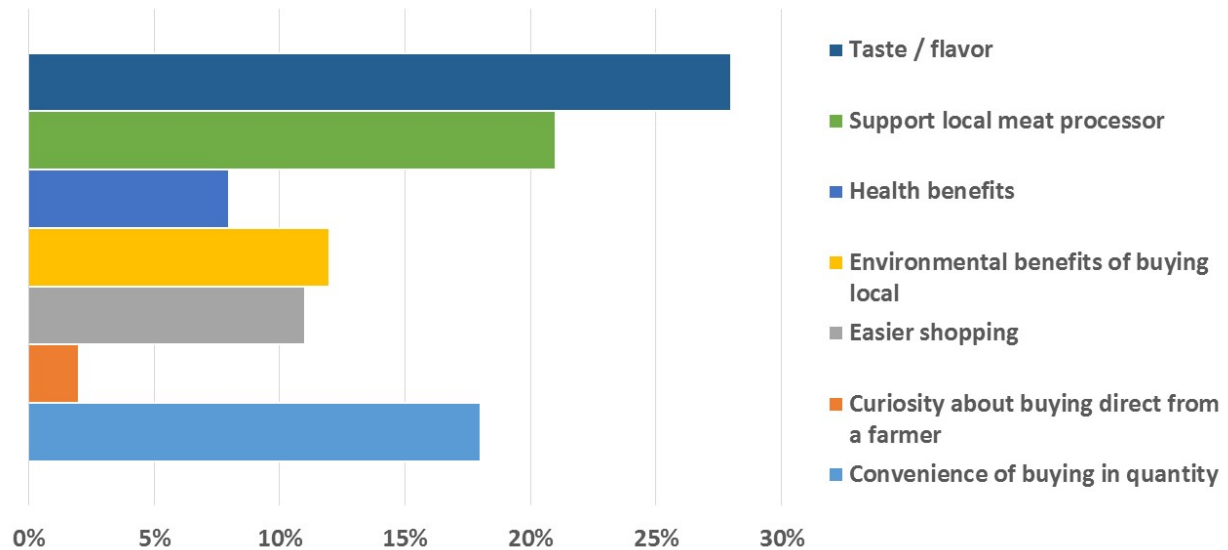
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| • CSAs average = 47 years old | • Christmas trees average = 48 years old |
| • Apples average = 47 years old | • Farmers markets average = 51 years old |
| • Berries average = 49 years old | • Livestock average = 51 years old |

Meat processor customer average age = 51 years old (46 years old for first time customers)

Who are your customers?



Why do you buy direct from a meat processor?



People could select as many reasons as they'd like. According to the data, most people buy direct because of taste / flavor and to support local meat processor. The comments mentioned quality, variety, and trust most frequently. Other reasons are more unique and personal.

Customer Quotes

"Availability of products not found in grocery stores."

"It is less expensive than the Hy-Vee Meat counter. Unique products."

"The store always smells so good."

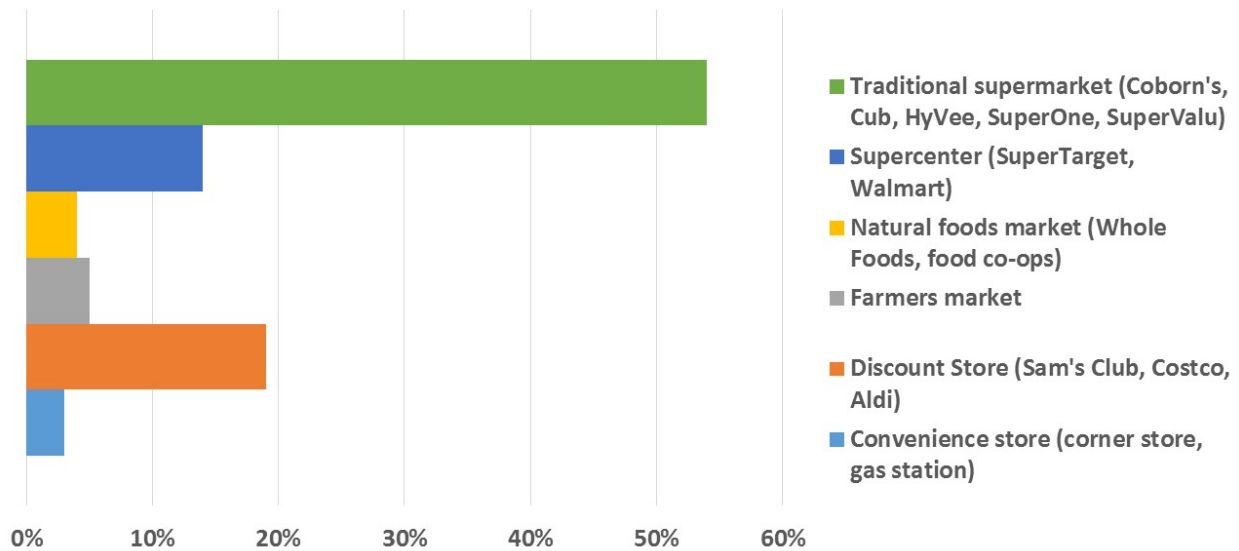
"Grew up with meat markets and still believe in them."

"Integrity, and small business, with continuity."

"Trust local more than chain vendors."

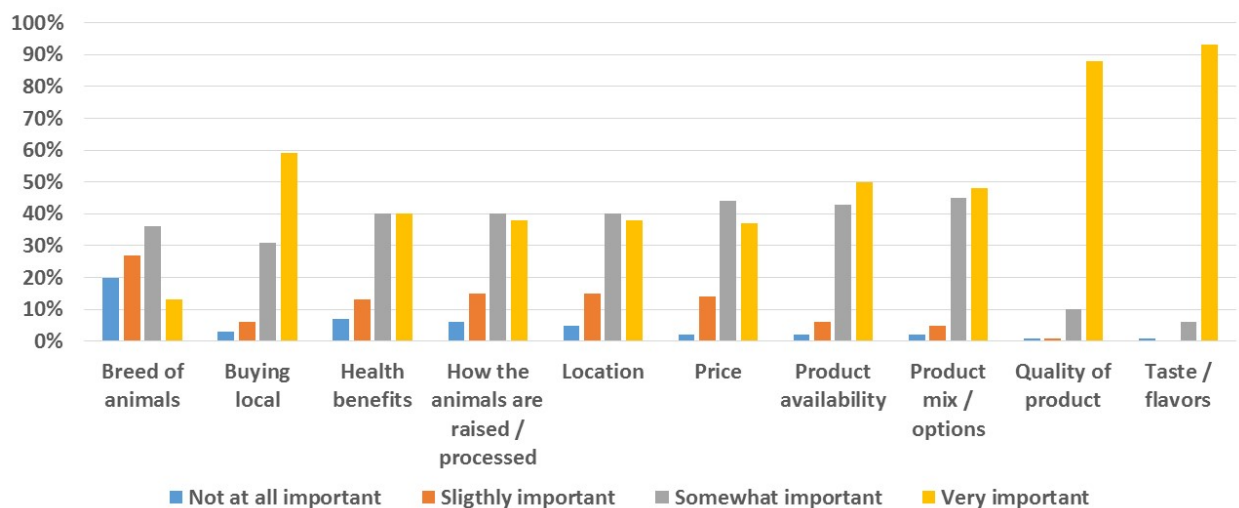
"I would rather purchase meat cuts I can see as opposed to prepacked in liquid."

During a typical month, where else do you purchase your meat products?



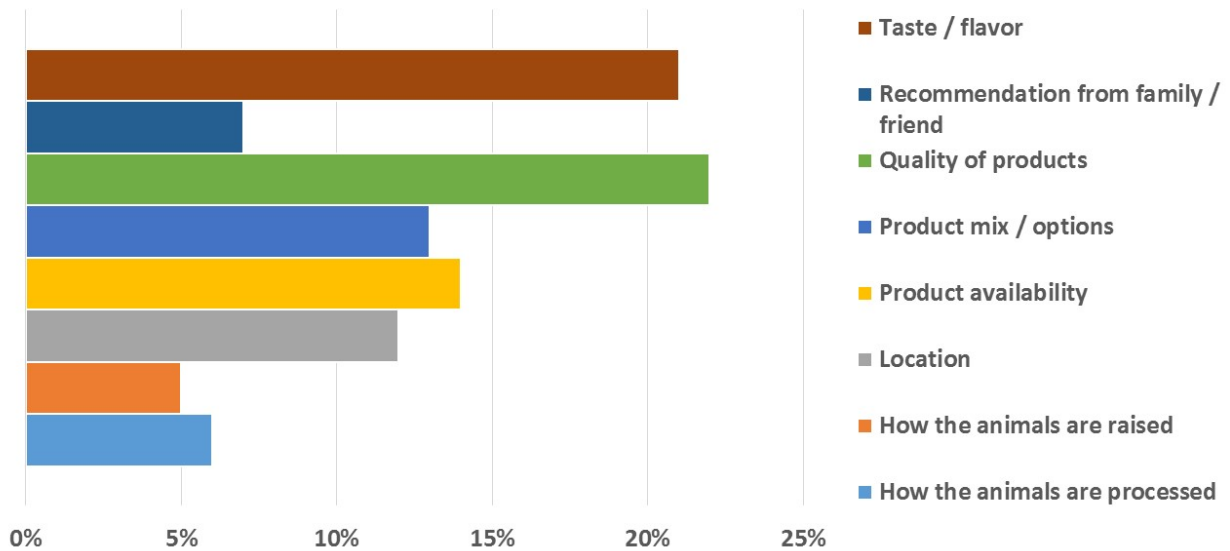
Over half of the customers also purchase their meat products at traditional supermarkets (54%). The next closest are discount stores (19%), and supercenter (14%).

When choosing between meat processors who offer similar products, how important are the following in your final decision to buy?



Customers were permitted to select all applicable answers regarding choosing between meat processors offering similar products. By far, the taste / flavor and quality of the product were the reasons they chose. Next was buying local, product availability, and product mix.

Why do you buy from us?



The reasons people bought from their meat processors were predominantly quality of products and taste / flavor. Above all else, the comments mentioned friendly staff. Further, they mentioned shopping local, the meat processor's reputation, and other personal preferences.

Customer Quotes

"Service from a small family owned company."

"#1 I know the meat is fresh daily. #2 Staff is knowledgeable and extremely helpful."

"Have everything you need and can special order for occasions as needed."

"It's the best meat market I've ever been to!!!"

"Tradition of fine meats for many years."

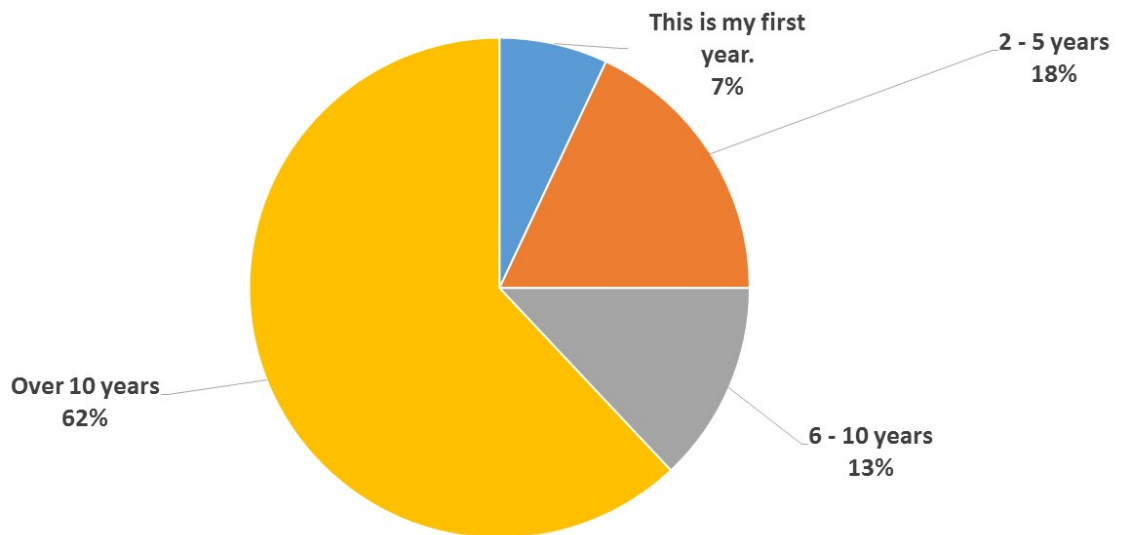
"It's where the cow gets butchered."

"Nostalgia when going to Grandma and Grandpa's house in New Ulm."

"Smells clean; friendly; like to watch my meat processed; able to hand pick."

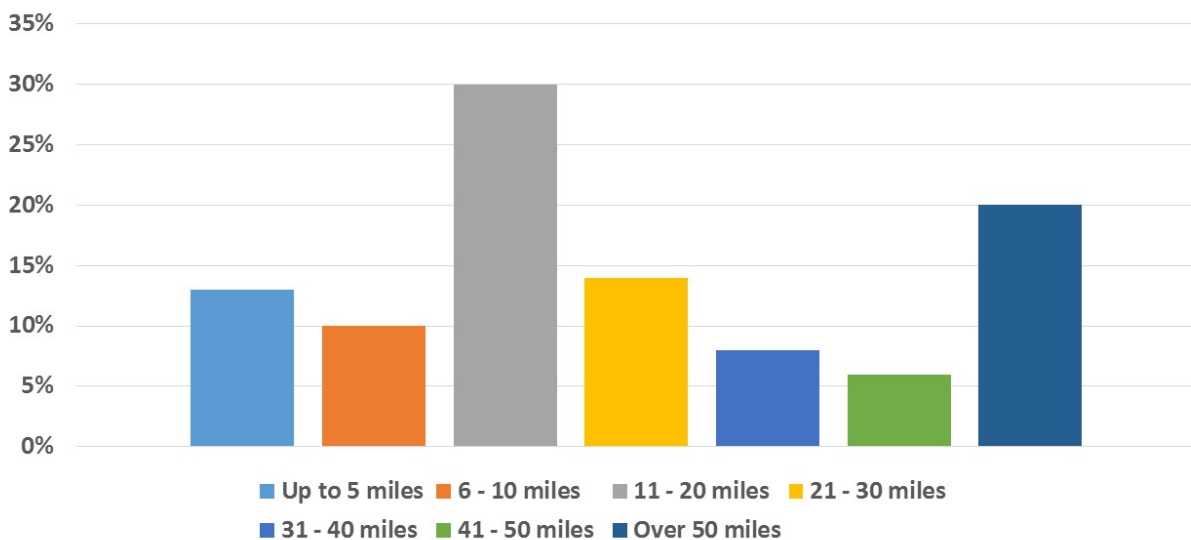
"Support small business owner."

How long have you bought from us?



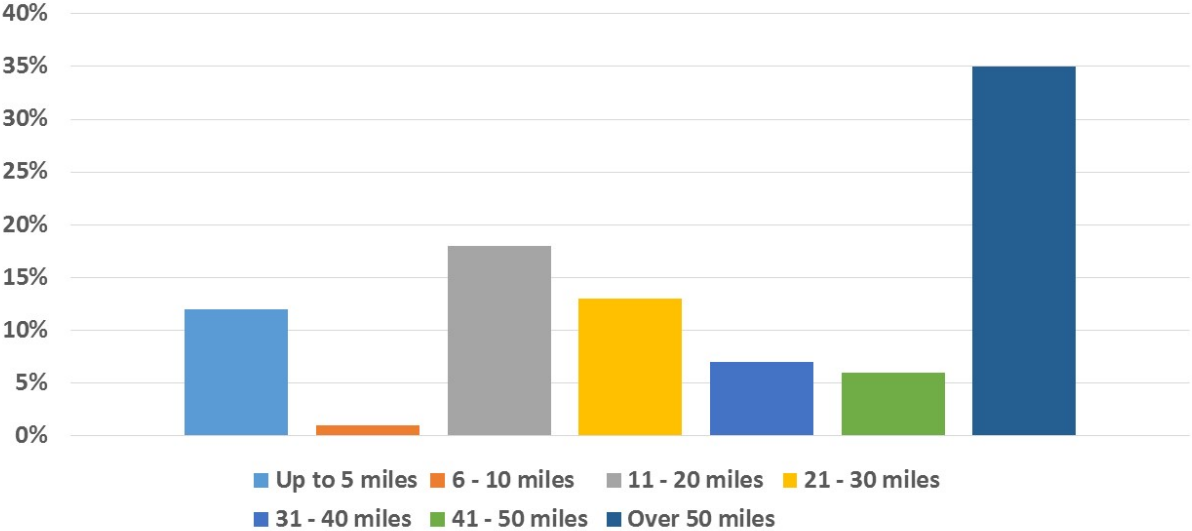
On average, customers have been buying from their meat processors for 8 years. Well over half of the customers have been buying for over 10 years and for only 7% was this their first year buying from their meat processor. Throughout this report, we will note additional interesting first time customer findings.

How far do you travel to buy our products?



A third of customers travel between 11 to 20 miles to their meat processor and 20% travel 50 miles or more. On average, customers travel 26 miles to purchase meat at a processor.

How far do you travel to buy our products? (1st timers)



More than a third of first time customers are willing to travel more than 50 miles to their meat processor (35%). On average, first time customers travel 32 miles to purchase meat at a processor. Several people mentioned in the comments, they visit the meat processors when they are in town or traveling through towards another destination.



Not only is it less expensive to retain your existing customers – they also spend more on average per sale! Customers spent \$78.61 on average. First time customers spent \$66.89 on average.

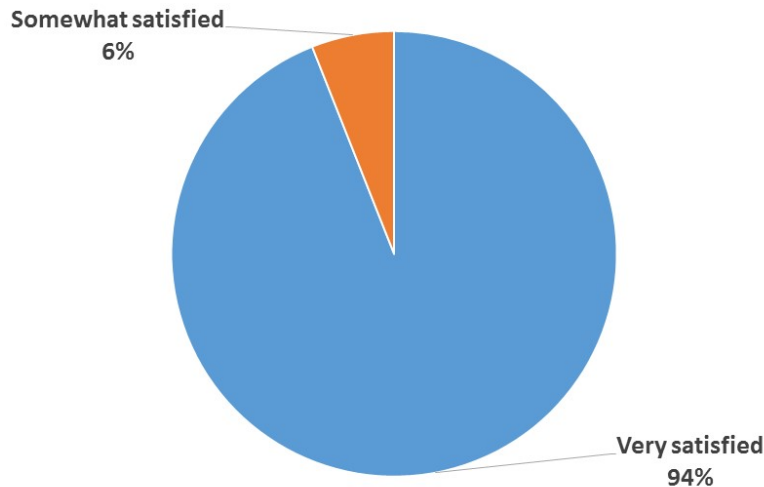


The quality of products rated a 9.6 on a scale of 1 to 10.



The variety of products rated a 9.4 on a scale of 1 to 10.

How satisfied are you by current packaging size options?



The vast majority of customers are very satisfied with current packaging options. Those who were not satisfied primarily mentioned the desire to purchase packages in smaller portions, most often in two person portions. Many were exceptionally happy they could purchase exactly the amounts and cuts they wanted when they shopped at their meat processor.

Customer Quotes

"They will make the packages the size that best suits our family, if your family is small they make the package smaller or if it is large they will do whatever suits our family."

"You can buy in whatever quantities you want. They are more than happy to prepare a special cut on the spot if they don't have what you need in the counter cooler."

"We have a large family and the product packaging is never too much. It might be when our children are gone."

"Always appreciate the willingness of staff to slice the sausage stick if I only am interested in partial, or from meat counter being able to buy the quantity desired. Good for a single purchase or group gathering."

"There are only two of us in our house. I like that I can come in and purchase the size of product for my needs. And your staff is very helpful in splitting product to accommodate my size needs."

"I have asked to have a roast cut so I could purchase half, but was told that was not allowed. That makes it hard for those of us who want a fresh, smaller roast, but do not want to be forced to freeze half of it for a later meal."

"There are just 2 of us and we need smaller quantity packages and there are great size choices for us as well as larger options."

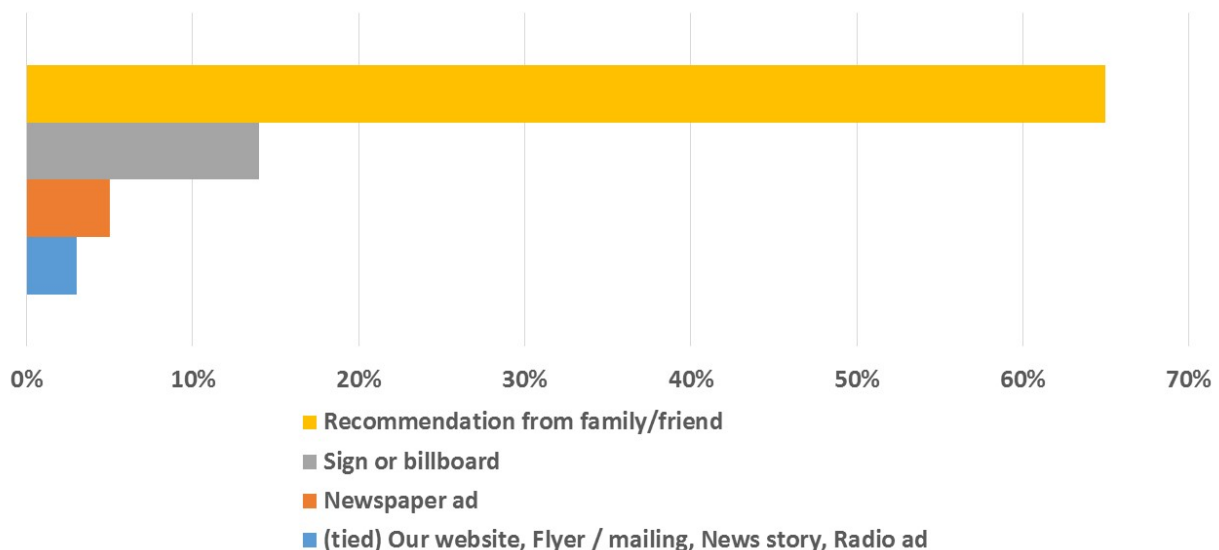
"I like the single slices, the one pound of hamburger, and various package sizes of bacon."

"Living alone, I would like to purchase less than a prepackaged pound of bacon, less than five landjaegers and other items that are prepackaged."

"Packaging sizes are perfect. I buy the larger packs and smaller packs of sticks depending on how many are here. Brats are a perfect size for my wife and I. You can never have too big of a bag of jerky."

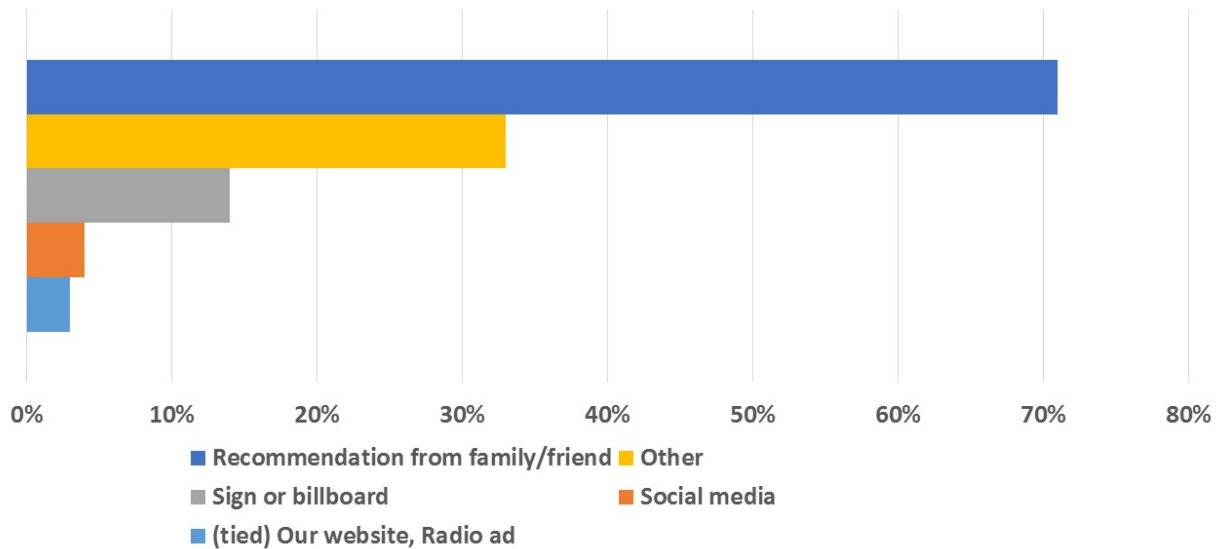
"There's only two of us at home now and the size of the packaging is perfect for us because we can take one package out to cook and it's enough for the both of us."

How did you find out about us?



Customers were able to select all that apply. It is clear, recommendations from family and friends is the primary way people learn about meat processors (65%). Next are sign or billboard (14%), and newspaper ad (5%). Remember: Recommendations from family and friends now often happen via Facebook.

How did you find out about us? (1st timers)



By and large, first time customers found out about their meat processors through recommendations from family/friends (71%), followed closely by “Other” (33%). In this case, customers selecting “Other” meant they drove by the meat processor, grew up in the area, or learned of it from a school fundraiser or raffle.



All things considered, customers are exceptionally likely to recommend their meat processor to a friend or family member (9.9 on a scale of 1 to 10). Their reasons why they recommend a meat processor have much to do with customer service, good experiences (in-store & product), and previous positive feedback from family and friends after a recommendation.

Customer Quotes

"Super helpful, friendly staff. You can tell they all take pride in the products and are happy to offer prep suggestions, etc. Great experience shopping."

"I do recommend and share your products all the time, with excellent feedback!"

"I had a book club recently with a bunch of Mpls yuppies and I served your jerky as a snack and they're all making up trip up to see you."

"I have recommend your store many times. Friends had a discussion about sauerkraut and how they couldn't find the sauerkraut like their grandmothers made. I sent them your way and bragged about your other products."

"We have recommended you to dozens of people throughout the years. None of them have been disappointed."

"We recommend you to friends/acquaintances all the time. People tell us we are lucky to live in the same town as your business, and we know we are."

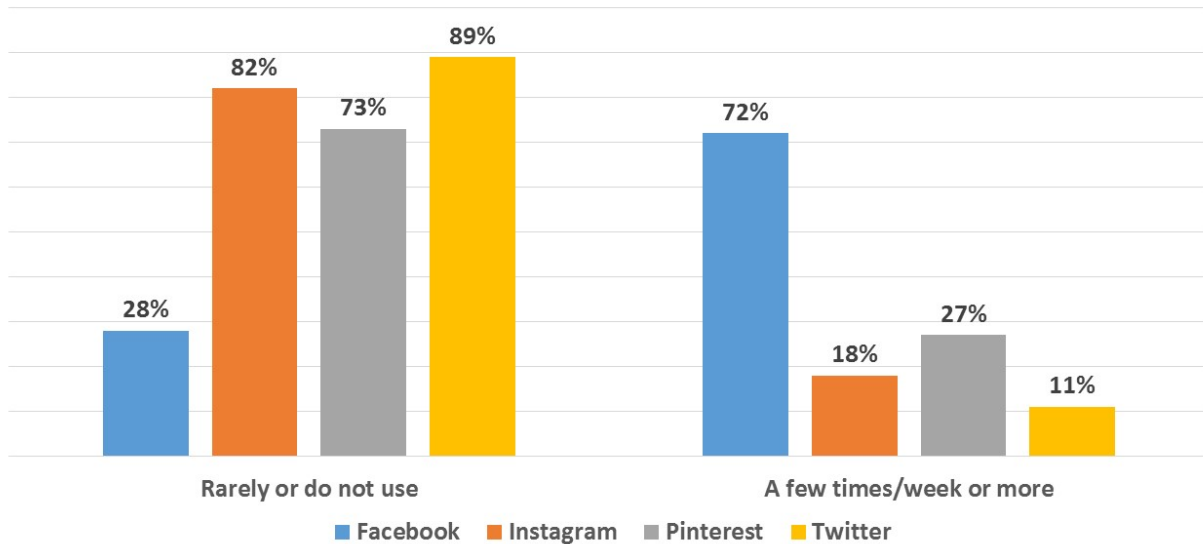
"I recommend them to others all the time. We live in a town several miles away but make a point of driving the distance for their good quality when we can."

"Already have recommended you, and they have stopped & purchased & really enjoyed it too. We are all coming from 140 miles away."

"Always recommend - great place with high quality."

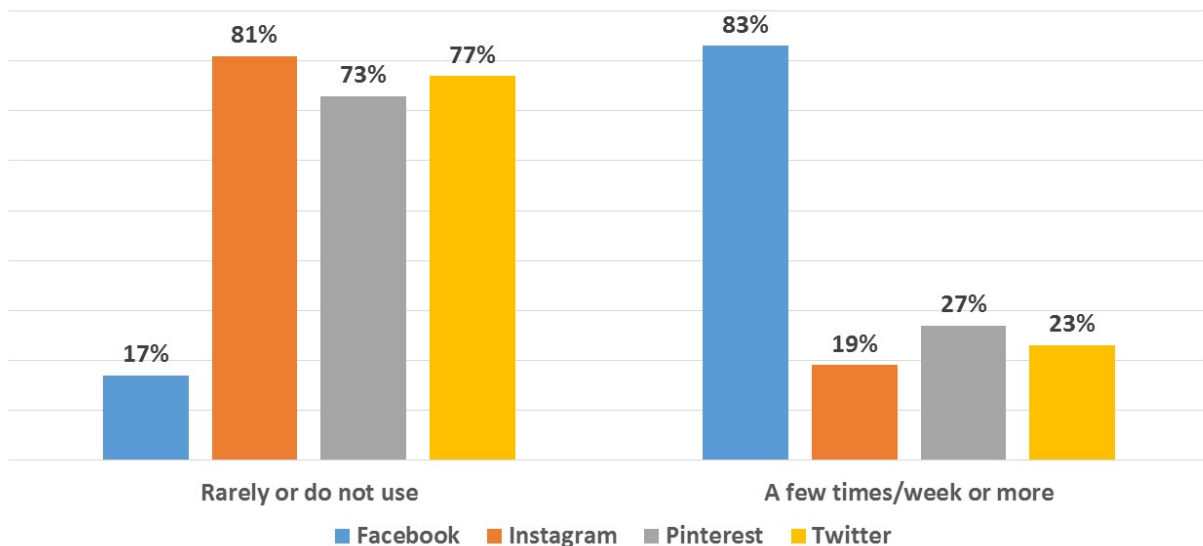
"Are you kidding! I spread the word as best I can! Oh and your counter clerks are great! They are always busy, but will take the time to tell you ways to fix a cut of meat!!! One of the gals told me how to grill the tri-tip and it's perfect every time!"

How often do you use the following social media?



Comparable to our other customer satisfaction research studies, the majority of people using social media regularly use Facebook a few times per week or more (72%). Next are Pinterest (27%) and Twitter (11%).

How often do you use the following social media? (1st timers)



First time customers also predominately use Facebook a few times per week or more (83%), followed by Pinterest (27%), and Twitter (23%). Considering the distance first time customers travel to shop their

meat processor, it is highly likely some of the recommendations from family and friends were via Facebook.

First Time Surveying Meat Processing Customers

Since this is the first time we are doing a study of this nature with meat processor customers, we asked a couple of broader questions to learn from customers and help inform what we are able to offer meat processors.

What else do customers want to know about the products, or the meat processors?

Most customers are satisfied. Of those who commented, the vast majority of customers wanted to know about where meat processors are sourcing their meat, how the livestock is raised and processed, and if the meat is local, how local is it? Other comments were tied to the desire to have more nutrition information, understand treatment and butchering of the livestock, and new recipes to try.

Customer Quotes

"Source of meat. I've asked and no-one knew. Method of raising animals. Diet of animals."

"I'd like a nutrition guide available (and maybe it is and I just don't know it) on line about calorie/fat/etc. for the various sausages, sticks, cold cuts, etc."

"It would be interesting to know where the cattle are raised. I figure it's local but a town or farm would be nice to know. We love the farm to table concept."

"Are the products organic, hormone free, grass fed, etc."

"Recipes and ideas for how to cook steaks, beef roasts and other misc. meat that you sell. Not everyone knows how to cook a steak properly."

"What farms your animals come from and how they are raised until they are ready?"

"Curious if you offer organic/grass fed only meats. I haven't tried inquiring, but curious as I have this option from Costco. I would prefer to give my business to the local meat market if they offered such."

"How exactly are the animals raised, how local is the meat?"

"I wish I knew more about where the meat products come from in terms of location and how they are raised."

"Would be nice to know where the meat is sourced (list of local farmers or a map?)"

"You really should make the information on where you source your animals from and processing methods used more available. It seems suspicious or maybe lazy to not publicize this info."

"A poster or something on how animals were raised/where they came from/what cuts come from what part of the animal, etc. would be interesting to see."

What can we do to improve your buying experience?

The majority of customers are relatively satisfied, however a few themes came to light in their comments. The biggest requests are for improved customer management at point of sale, price incentives (lower prices/loyalty program), more locations, extended hours (evenings and weekends), and samples/more samples.

Customer Quotes

"Honestly it has always been a very pleasant experience to visit the store. I have not seen samples readily available the last times I have been in and always enjoyed that. Not necessary, but maybe just on Saturdays or something would be a great option."

"I don't expect it, but it WOULD be nice if you were open a little later, as I work the same hours you guys do, most days."

"Improvement in order that customers are helped. Some patrons are helped right away and others wait and wait, depending on where they are standing. The amount of workers is appropriate, but there should be some consistency in the order that customers are helped."

"A customer rewards program would draw more good business or offering samples of some of the specialty flavors."

"Stay open later in the evenings Thursday and Fridays and how about 12-4 on Sundays?"

"Maybe have numbers, for people who don't like to barge ahead or are too shy to push forward."

"Maybe open later one night a week for those who work until 5 and have to travel more than 30 miles."

"Maybe quantity discounts or a punch card for purchases to get an incentive after purchasing so much."

"Open another store."

"Opening a location nearer to the Twin Cities."

"GET A LARGE TAPE OF NUMBERS FOR PATRONS AND CALL OUT CUSTOMERS BY THE NUMBER. Your haphazard way of having employees call out "Who's next?" only results in the first person who makes eye contact with staff to get serviced. If we were able to grab a paper number when we arrive, customers would be served more fairly!"

"In previous years you had a very nice assortment of samples every day. I really liked and appreciated that little extra. I can understand that there were people taking advantage of the samples - perhaps some every day."

Key Findings

- 62% of customers have shopped their meat processor for 10+ years with the average being 8 years and for only 7% of customers was this their first year.
- Taste / flavor and to support local meat processors were the primary reasons people buy direct. Also mentioned: Quality, variety, and trust.
- Overall average sales were \$78.61 and average sales for first time customers were \$66.89.
- A third of customers travel between 11 - 20 miles and 20% travel 50+ miles to their meat processor. The average is 26 miles.
- 35% of first time customers are willing to travel 50+ miles and first time customers travel 32 miles on average.
- Customers want to purchase packages in smaller portions, most often in two portion sizes.
- Quality (9.6) and Variety (9.4) both scored highly on a scale of 1 to 10.
- Customers want to know where their meat is sourced, how livestock is raised and processed, and how local is it?
- People from several locations made comments about customer management at the counter and register. Something as simple as having numbers for who is being served next would make many customers happier.
- Recommendations from family and friends were the primary way people learned of their meat processors (65%), followed by sign/billboard (14%), and newspaper ad (5%)
- For first time customers, recommendations from family and friends still lead the pack at 71%, however "Other" (33%) came in second. Read the results to learn more!
- Customers requested better customer management at point of sale, price incentives (lower prices/loyalty program), more locations, extended hours (evenings and weekends), and samples/more samples to improve the buying experience.
- 72% of customers use Facebook a few times per week or more and this number jumps to 83% for first time customers.
- All things considered, customers are very highly likely to recommend their meat processor to a friend or family member (9.9 on a scale of 1 to 10).

What did meat processors say about the survey process?

Feedback from the meat processors about the process was generally positive and we learned from them as well. Thank you for your feedback!

The meat processors appreciated great communication and the ease of participation in the research project. They also felt the surveys helped engage customers in a positive way and that the information from the research project will be an asset.

Meat Processors' Quotes

Easy

"Great communication about the survey and letting how to approach customers - training sheet was helpful for the entire staff."

"It was easy to sign up and easy to hand out the cards."

Engaging and Useful

"More surveys like this that engage the end consumer. Increasing the customer's engagement with MN grown."

"I think the information we gain will be an asset to all of us."

"Most comments were: "Cool! We'll be sure to fill it out." I think the \$25 gift card was a great incentive."

Data Collaboration and Sharing the Information

Participating meat processors also received confidential, individual market reports including their summarized, anonymous data and customer comments.

The aggregate report is posted online and also announced in the Member Update newsletter.

Anonymized data sharing and collaboration with select partners is important to help increase statewide demand for local products.

We continue to listen to farmers, markets, producers, and business owners to increase the value of the results. [Contact us if you have any questions about this or other customer satisfaction research projects!](#)

