

# Salon Experience 2011 Survey Results

## Executive Summary:

Listening to the feedback of beauty salon clients is critical to maintain and to improve client retention rates. Salon owners must have a firm understanding of their clients' expectations, needs, and willingness to pay for particular services to make the best business decisions.

We conducted a survey of regular salon guests (all women) to review their satisfaction with their salon experiences. Although most women are generally satisfied, our survey results revealed that many have not recently experienced a truly memorable salon visit.

Our research showed that salon owners who want to increase their client retention rate should focus on the improvement in the following areas: 1) time management, 2) customer service skills of their entire staff, 3) consultations, and 4) process to accept client appointments. The results also revealed that 38% of women will simply seek to find a new stylist when dissatisfied with their salon experience.

In conclusion, clients expect salons to pay attention to customer service along with processing hair. The salons that are willing to go the extra mile to provide memorable experiences will be able to enjoy higher than average client retention rates and superior profits.

## Summary of survey approach:

We anonymously polled over 115 women online who visit hair salons across the United States in September 2011. The results excluded responses from women who had not been to a licensed hair salon in more than one year. In addition, we screened out clients who identified themselves as professional hairstylists.

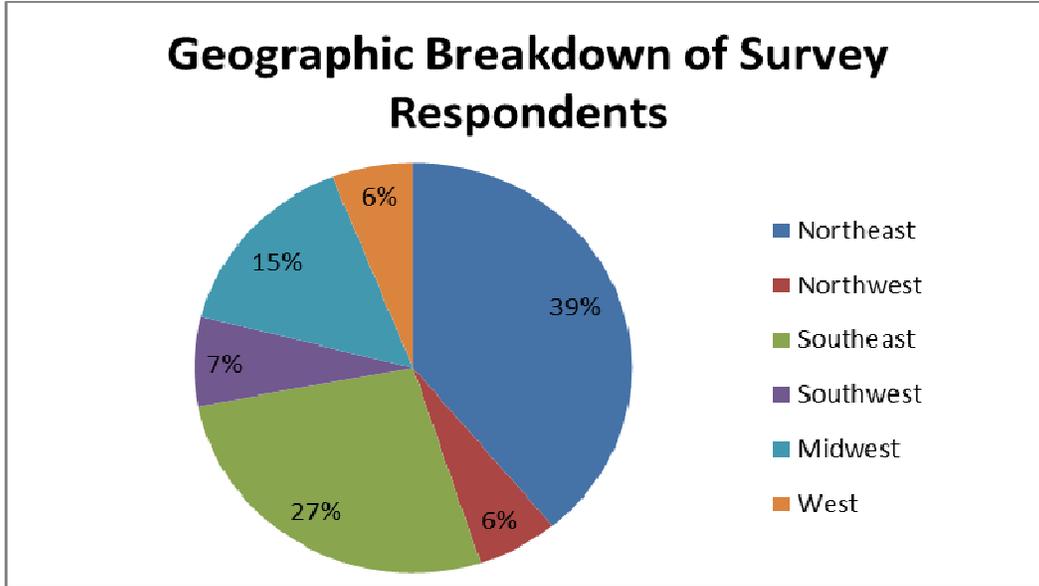
The clients rated how they valued several customer service features. Through open-ended questions, the women shared their perception of the "ideal" salon experience as well as specific suggestions for salon owners to improve client retention.



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## Background of clients in survey

A majority (about 66%) of the salon clients that took our survey reside on the East Coast.



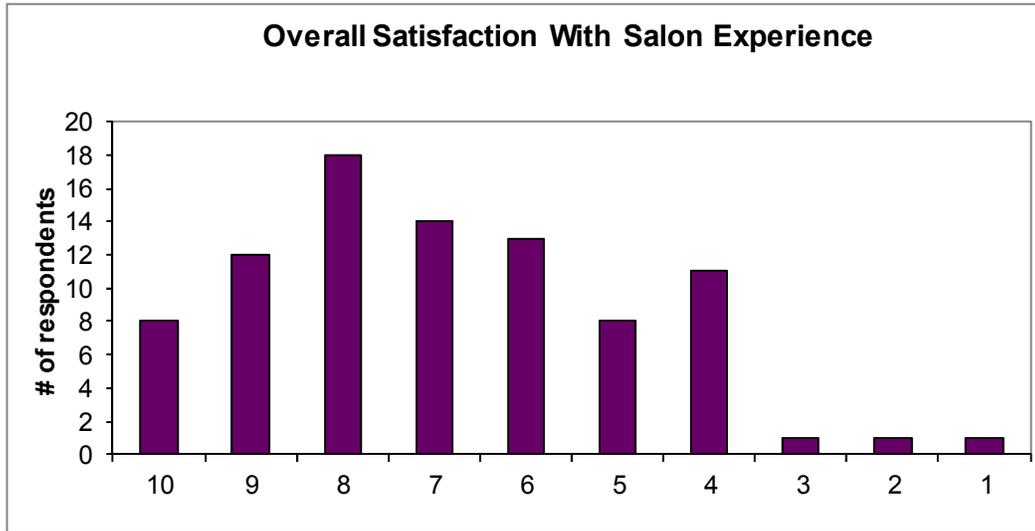
A majority of the respondents visit a professional hair salon at least every 6 to 12 weeks.



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## Summary of Findings:

Overall, clients are generally very satisfied with their options of professional hair salon services in their area. On a 1 to 10 scale (10 being most satisfied), 58% of clients rated their satisfaction between 7 and 10.



Clients that are happy with their salons are more inclined to recommend their stylist or salon to friends or family. In the last 3 months, 64% of clients have referred a friend or family member, according to our survey results

## Memorable Salon Visits

We asked the survey respondents to describe a memorable salon visit and explain why it was special. Of note, a number of clients had to choose a salon experience from the past (not their current salon).

*"I am the caregiver of a 105 year old grandmother, and my stylist invited me to bring her in for a service with her mother and to my surprise she loved it and will be returning."*

*"I will never forget my prom salon visit even though it was 6 years ago. My stylist made me feel like it was my special day and was able to combine styles to give me the perfect look!"*

*"A year ago I had a really bad color job done and my hair began to have severe breakage. I was almost in tears about the condition of my hair and thought it would never be healthy again. However, my stylist was so comforting when I saw her, and reassured me that she would get my hair back to normal. She did it, and I've been a loyal customer ever since."*

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## Most Valued Features

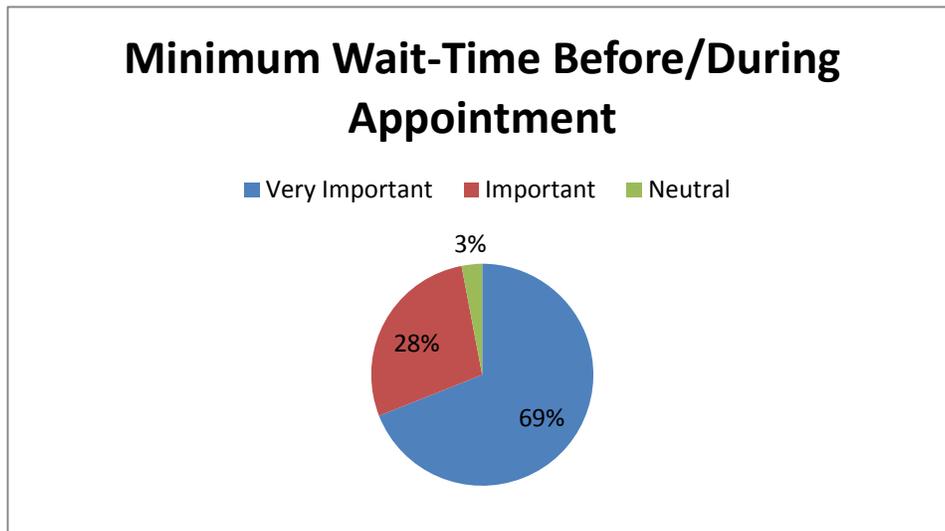
We asked the clients to rate how they value (i.e. would be willing to pay for) different common customer service features. The respondents rated each feature as Very Important, Important, Neutral, or Not Important.

**The highest rated features included:**

### 1. Minimum wait-time before and during appointments

97% rated this feature as either Very Important or Important (69% rated this feature as Very Important). No one rated this feature as Not Important.

A waiting client is an unhappy client. Many consumers voiced frustration about extended wait times that result from improper bookings (including over-booking, mis-booking or staff lateness). Effective time management is strongly associated with a positive memorable salon visit.



### Top Open-ended Comments:

- *“RESPECT MY TIME. I AM A BUSY PROFESSIONAL. I do not want to spend 4 hours at the beauty salon on a Saturday when I have a lot of other personal affairs to [handle]”*
- *“I shouldn’t have to sit and wait for a weave to be done when all I am getting is a wash and blow dry.”*
- *“Decrease the wait time!!!! That is my biggest, biggest turn off for visiting a salon.”*
- *“Please do not keep the customer waiting if you are running late. Allow someone else in the salon to start the process and then you can come in and finish up. If you are going to*

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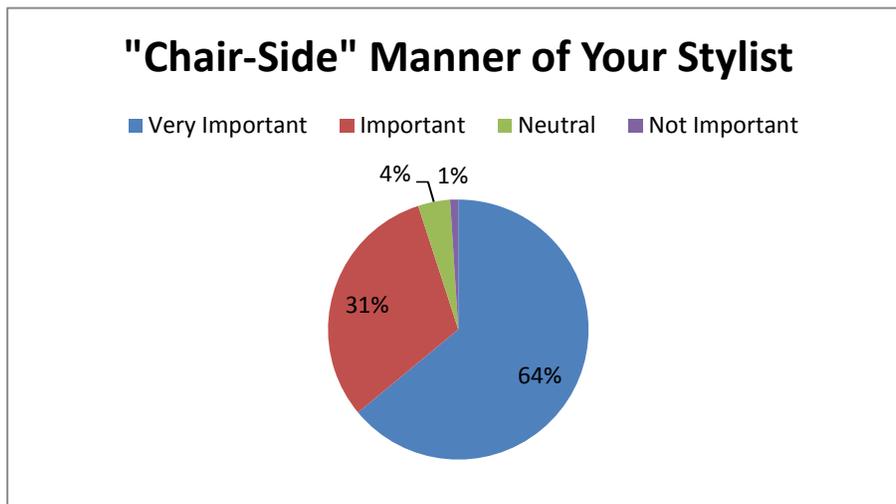
*cancel an appointment, don't wait till the appointment time, have someone call the client in advance."*

- *"Efficient scheduling of appointments so that I don't have excessive waits."*

### 2. "Chair-side" manner of your stylist

95% rated this feature as either Very Important or Important (64% rated this feature as Very Important). Only 1% viewed rated this feature as Not Important.

"Chair-side" manner is another way to describe the general customer service and interpersonal skills of a stylist. Clients expect stylists to communicate to his/her guests in a professional, caring manner that highlights expertise. A good chair-side manner allows clients to build a strong connection with their stylists. Clients begin to evaluate a stylist's communication from the start of the consultation until the checkout.



#### Top Open-ended Comments:

- *"Chair side manner is so very important. We don't have to have "girlfriend chatter" but conversation and answers to hair care questions are very much appreciated."*
- *"Please don't curse and gossip about other staff and clients."*

### 3. Politeness of entire salon staff

95% rated this feature as either Very Important or Important (56% rated this feature as Very Important). None of clients surveyed rated this feature as Not Important.

Clients may interact with a number of team members during the course of their visit. The survey takers rated that the courteousness of the entire staff counts, not just the hair care professional who performs the major service.

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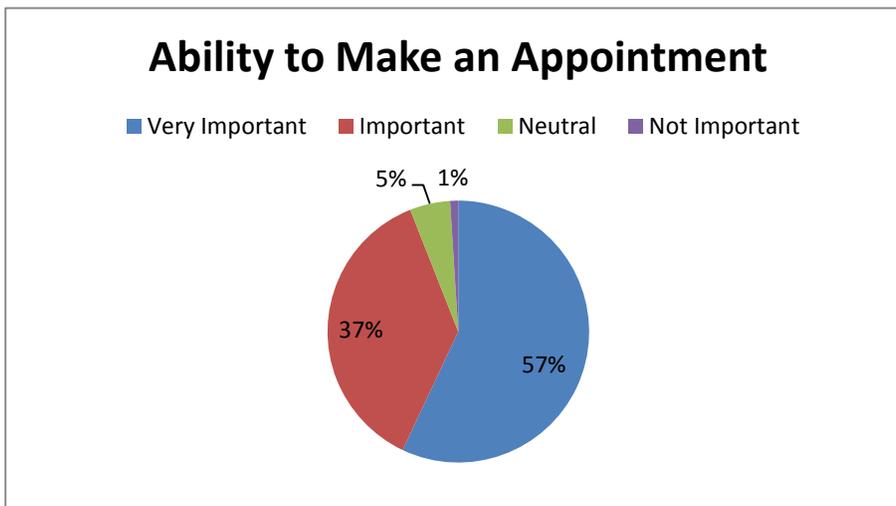
### **Top Open-ended Comments:**

- *“Train your staff to offer superior customer service. Always accommodate clients.”*
- *“I don't mind paying a premium for excellent service.”*

### **4. Ease of Making an Appointment**

94% rated this feature as either Very Important or Important (56% rated this feature as Very Important). 3% viewed rated this feature as Not Important.

Clients expect to make a hair care appointment easily. We did not have the respondents give their opinions about the various ways to book an appointment today (phone, in the salon, or online). A few clients did comment that they appreciate the ability to accommodate last minute appointments.



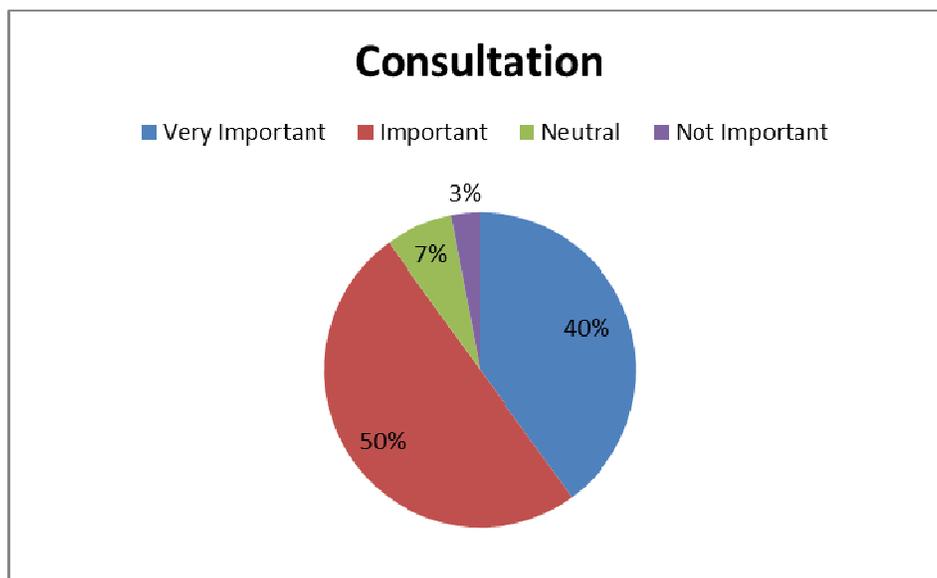
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## 5. Consultation

90% rated this feature as either Very Important or Important (56% rated this feature as Very Important). 3% viewed rated this feature as Not Important.

Clients want to have a dialogue with their stylist to get feedback on the condition of their hair and to review the planned services to set expectations. A number of clients mentioned that they want a collaborative process where they can ask questions about products and style alternatives before their service begins. Clients appreciate an honest assessment but would like to have input on the final approach.

In addition, clients evaluate stylists by their tactfulness in delivering this information. A number of survey respondents also said that the ability to listen is just as important as the ability to show knowledge of hair care services and products.



### Top Open-ended Comments:

- *"I want someone who KNOWS hair: can tell me what's wrong and how to fix it; can guide me to the proper products and resources."*
- *"A private consultation prior to service is so critical. It manages expectations and keeps the client happy. If my hair requires a trim, please tell me or I will think that my ends are fine."*
- *"Listen to the customer, but not just what they are saying but what they are not saying. Read between the lines. Most customers don't know what they really want but they know what they don't want. And if their hair is not able to produce the "picture" they brought in, give them alternative looks that would better suit them. Bottom line we just want to look our best!"*
- *"I go to my physician for healthcare advice and I look to my hair care professional for hair care advice. If asked a question, please don't brush it off."*

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## Other Valued Features

### Special hours for your clients

- 71% viewed this feature as Very Important or Important.
- Many clients mentioned that the traditional salon hours often conflicted with their lifestyle. A number of open ended responses pointed out that early appointments or hours of operations on Sundays or Mondays would be valued.

### Availability of Special Treatments/Equipment:

- 63% viewed this feature as Very Important or Important.
- Salons that can provide special treatments and equipment to cater to various hair care needs are viewed as more valuable. Clients are also willing to pay extra for additional treatments.

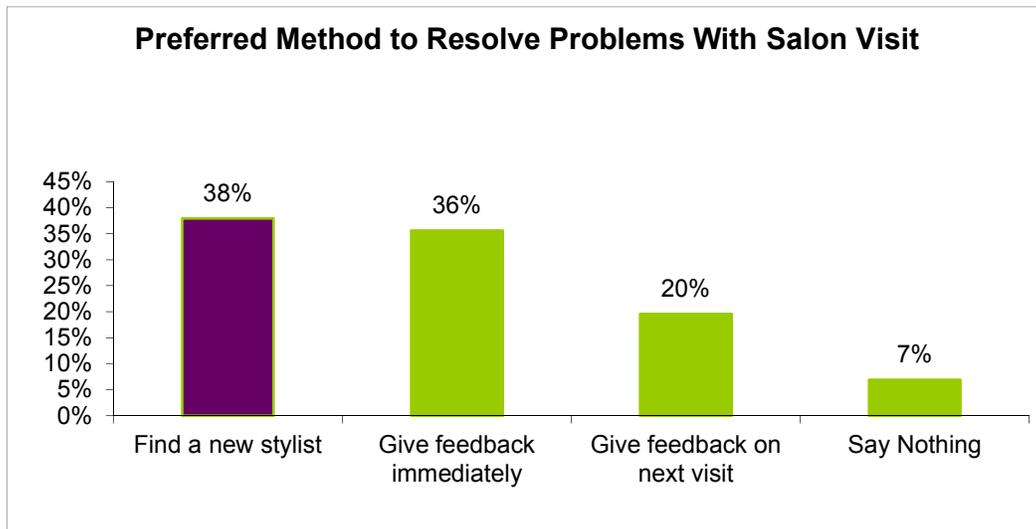
## Featured Not As Valued

Clients rated these features as Not Important by roughly 25%. Although, some clients did mention these features in their descriptions of memorable salon visits, the survey results show clients are not willing to pay a premium for them.

- Greeted at door
- Refreshments
- Internet Access

## How Clients Prefer to Share Feedback

Roughly 56% will share feedback either immediately or on the next visit. However 38% will just find a new stylist. Only 7% of clients answered that they would not express their dissatisfaction with a service.



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## Value of Multi-cultural Salons

Today, many salons seek to attract a broad client base. We asked clients if it mattered whether their salon primarily catered to women of their own ethnic group (i.e. if you are African-American, you visit salons where most of the guests would identify themselves as African-American).

62% of women who completed the survey agreed that it is important to visit a salon where their ethnic group makes up a majority of the guests. Open-ended comments from the survey suggest that women need assurance that the salon employs staff that is competent in working with their particular hair texture type. Visual proof, such as the guests that they can see in the salon, helps establish this credibility.

Further research is required to draw any additional conclusions.

## General Suggestions to improve service

Here are a few of the suggestions for salon owners offered by the clients in the survey:

- Offer special hours to accommodate clients with busy schedules
- Make sure that the atmosphere is consistent with your brand and your target guests (including music)
- Provide high quality products (A few clients mentioned natural products)
- Offer educational trainings for clients to support hair journey
- Disclose when you have less experienced stylists performing a service
- Text messages and emails are great ways to communicate with customers outside of the salon
- Reward longtime clients with special benefits or discounts

## Key Conclusions

### **Seize opportunity to improve new customer retention through better customer service.**

Ensure that your staff has the proper communication skills to deliver your vision for the service experience. In this study, clients frequently highlighted examples of exemplary customer service as most memorable in their salon experiences. In addition, since a significant group of clients will simply find a new stylist when unhappy, salon owners should proactively confirm whether their service standards are meeting the mark.

**Enforce competency standards.** A number of clients mentioned that they have endured poor service experiences from stylists who had not mastered a particular service. The negative impact on your overall salon experience rating is not worth the short term revenue. Salon owners must take more accountability to match clients with the appropriate staff and ensure that staff receives regular training.

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**Play a larger role in educating clients.** Clients feel more loyalty toward stylists that they view as hair care advisors not just technicians. Superior salons have an opportunity to fill in the gap in education between what clients read online and the information provided by the average salon. By regularly posting blog posts or hosting in-salon educational events, salons can influence client decisions beyond just the consultation and create a more loyal client base.

**Invest to improve time management in the salon.** Continue to train staff in how to use salon resources to manage client volume throughout the day. The proper use of assistants can improve the workflow in a salon. If you find that you need to increase the number of assistants, you can offset the increase in cost with a price increase. The study showed that women are willing to pay a premium for a speedier salon experience. However, the study also showed that time management is a bit of a balancing act. Clients want personalized attention without feeling rushed.

**Strive to create more memorable visits.** Memorable visits can happen on special occasions (i.e. weddings) but they can also occur on what can initially seem like a “regular” visit. It is clear from this study that a memorable visit can translate into cash flow over multiple years. A guest that has a memorable experience is more likely to remain a loyal client and is more willing to spread the word about the positive visit for years to come. Seize the opportunity to do more than “average” service and your word of mouth efforts can grow exponentially.

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### About the Author



V. Woods helps beauty businesses attract more happy clients to build wealth. Woods takes salon and spa professionals out of their marketing comfort zones to get them to think BIG. Through teleseminar programs, live workshops, and more customized offerings, she guides clients to build marketing plans centered on their loyal clients to achieve better financial results. She is currently working on her forthcoming book, “Happy Clients Count: 25 Ways to Build Wealth for Your Salon Business.” For more information about her services, visit her website, <http://bookyourchairsolid.com>

### Acknowledgements

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