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SHOPPER SURVEY: U.S. SUPERMARKETS GET MIXED REVIEWS

Retail Survey Group Finds Key Opportunities for Grocery Improvement

November 1, 2009

Plainview, NY – The Retail Survey Group (RSG) has released the results of its 2009 U.S. Supermarket Experience Survey. Shoppers were asked to rate their most recent trip to the grocery store. According to the findings, respondents from the Southern U.S. were most satisfied with their visit. Male and female shoppers were equally satisfied, while older customers gave higher ratings than younger respondents. Satisfaction was highest in the morning hours and declined throughout the day.

The recent survey of over 1,400 U.S. grocery shoppers asked respondents to rate the many aspects of their supermarket visit – from quality and variety in the produce department to restroom cleanliness; from service at the deli counter to checkout speed. There were twenty-four separate ratings in all.

“Some of the regional variances were quite interesting,” said Douglas Madenberg, President of RSG. For example, according to the survey, supermarkets in the Northeast received relatively low ratings for produce and cleanliness but higher marks for natural/organic variety and value for the money. And West region shoppers gave lower ratings for meat and checkout speed but were more satisfied with their overall visit than were shoppers in the Northeast and Midwest.

Overall, supermarkets received higher ratings for cleanliness, general grocery variety, and cashier friendliness. Respondents were also relatively pleased with the prices of items on sale at their grocery store. On the other hand, the lowest rated factors were variety of organic and ethnic items, quality of fresh seafood, and not surprisingly, the prices of items not on sale.

“We were struck by the low ratings for natural and organic variety, as well as the ethnic and international choices available,” said Madenberg. “These are areas that are

increasingly important to grocery shoppers, even with their current financial circumstances. Mainstream supermarkets are not adequately satisfying these needs.”

Another noteworthy survey finding was the importance of a store's being in-stock with everything a customer needs. “Shoppers who leave the store without an item they intended to purchase are far less satisfied with their overall visit,” said Madenberg. “Supermarkets need to recognize the importance of this.” The good news for grocery stores: the RSG survey found that nine out of ten shoppers indeed found everything they had come to buy.

The survey also tracked various shopping habits of supermarket customers:

- Use of self checkout technology was far more common among younger shoppers. Those under age twenty-five were twice as likely to use a self-service register as those over age forty.
- Nearly three out of five grocery shoppers referred to the store's advertising flier/circular at some point before or during their visit. Respondents in the Northeast and Midwest were more likely than those in the West and South to refer to a store's ad.
- Despite the national trend toward less usage of plastic shopping bags, nearly three-quarters of respondents used plastic bags for their groceries. About one in five supermarket customers brought their own reusable bags. Women were more likely than men to bring a reusable bag to the store.

Full Study Results available here:

<http://www.rsg.com/pdf/rsg%20supermarket%20experience%20survey%2009.pdf>

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The **Retail Survey Group** is a leading provider of customer and employee feedback systems to U.S. grocery retailers. For over 35 years, RSG has been helping supermarket companies listen to their key stakeholders and seek actionable feedback about the shopping and working experience.