Secondary Research: ALDI

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Aldi, the 13th largest grocery chain in the U.S. with 2,464 stores, faces the challenge of limited store locations compared to supermarkets and mass merchandisers like Walmart and Target. This accessibility issue can cause some shoppers to go to competitors, despite Aldi's growing brand awareness at 82%. While Aldi combats this with influencer marketing and an emphasis on low prices amidst inflation concerns, its main rivals remain Trader Joe's and Save-a-Lot in the limited assortment market sector. To thrive, Aldi must balance its expansion with its core values, expand its accessibility and ensure maintaining low prices and product quality with rising consumer demands in grocery shopping.

The secondary research concluded that it is necessary for Aldi to shift its target audience to the 18-24 age range. As shown in figure D, this age range is the current rising top spender, making them a key demographic for Aldi. However, Aldi has a limited number of locations in comparison to other grocery stores, causing many individuals within this demographic to shop at competitor stores. To combat this problem, additional primary research needs to be conducted to better understand the shopping habits, preferences, and motivations of this target demographic

Our research found that the opportunity most worthy of marketing research is the potential for Aldi to increase its advertising. This research would focus on the target demographic, consumers aged 18-24. Conducting research on the target demographic, and why they choose the grocery stores they currently shop at, will help the brand resolve any current issues and better strategize in the future. Research would consist of interviews, focus groups, and quantitative data collection, with the goal of better understanding if an increase in advertising would influence this demographic’s shopping habits.

Situation Analysis

Industry Analysis

The Supermarket and Grocery Stores Industry serves as the largest food service channel in the U.S. According to The Food Industry (FMI), Americans spent $1 trillion dollars in U.S. supermarkets in 2023. When inflation took effect and figures were adjusted, and total sales declined by 4%. Industry revenue has grown at the CAGR of 0.9% over the past five years and inflation pressures have caused a mixed effect (Irigoyen, 2024). The average weekly sales per supermarket is about $600,000, and the average weekly grocery spend per household is $165 in U.S. dollars. Between 2023-28, with an average annual growth rate of 2.7%; ecommerce set to expand 3.3%, there's an expected long-term growth of 13% (Smith, 2024).

In the average store size of 48,575 square feet, an average number of 31,704 items are carried in markets. Supermarkets now "shift their focus towards enhancing customer retention. In addition to pricing strategies, effective retention tactics include upgrading loyalty programs, exploring the integration of paid subscriptions where feasible, expanding the range of in-store services and features - especially with fresh foods, and emphasizing community engagement" (Smith, 2024).

With so much dependence as a primary role and channel of food in households, grocery stores play an important role in providing the basic necessities of affordable and reliable food. The arising problems and factors of customer loyalty, sustainability concerns, inflation, and online shopping are causing more competition in the industry. According to the Edelman Trust Barometer, Americans have far lower trust in leaders, government and business, than ever before. There's been flat inflation-adjusted prices with 46% of Americans's biggest concern being inflation. Some trends show that wealthier consumers continue to shop groceries at higher prices, while others are mostly cost sensitive. But even now more individuals from the higher class have started shopping at discount stores to save money on groceries. Today, shoppers are spending 36% more than they did in 2019, 87% of them are adjusting their purchasing habits to try to navigate the financially challenging landscape to save on their budget (Nielsen Consumer LLC, 2025). The vast amounts of variety in product options and geographic area stores follow the population distribution, therefore the higher the population is in one area, the higher demand there is for grocery stores. The Industry and market is expected to grow and benefit from a stabilizing economy between the years of 2025-2030. The leading companies being Walmart with profit margin of 2.7%, followed by the Kroger Co. at 1.8%, Albertsons Companies, Inc. at 1.9%, and Publix Super Markets, Inc. at 0.7%. For brand popularity in the U.S., Walmart is in the lead with 97% brand awareness, followed by Target at 94%, and ALDI at 82% (Irigoyen, 2024). All these various channels will see sales gains, but channels outside supermarkets will gain the most due to consumers' desire for value and convenience. The annual average growth rate from 2024-28 for supermarkets versus MULO is estimated at 1.3% versus 3.5%.

Company Analysis

Aldi’s company mission is focused on three key values: simplicity, consistency, and responsibility. The company states that they value simplicity in order to keep costs low, consistency to offer high quality products, and responsibility in terms of minimizing their environmental impact (Aldi, n.d.).

Aldi was founded by the Albrecht Family in 1961, making it the world’s first discount grocery store. While the first store opened was located in Germany, the first Aldi in the United States was opened 16 years later in 1976 in Iowa. Since, Aldi has expanded to over 2,400 stores in the United States, throughout 38 states. The current Aldi headquarters are located in Batavia, Illinois (Aldi, n.d.)

Since entering the United States market in 1976, Aldi has become the 13th largest grocery store chain in the country. As of 2023, Aldi had brought in approximately $27 billion in sales, resulting in the company possessing a 2.1% share of the grocery retail market (Supermarket News, 2023).

Aldi product offerings consist of a curated selection of grocery items sold for affordable prices. This includes fresh produce, meat, and dairy, in addition to a variety of specialty items that cater to dietary restrictions and preferences. More than 90% of the products sold by Aldi belong to one of the company’s three exclusive brands: Simply Nature, Live G Free, and Specially Selected. All products from each of these brands are guaranteed to to contain no synthetic colors, no MSG added, and no added trans fats. Products from these Aldi exclusive brands are sold for affordable prices, costing up to 50% less than their national brand competitors. Additionally, Aldi sells various household essentials and pet products (Aldi, n.d.).

Aldi key personnel includes:

- Jason Hart- Chief Executive Officer
- Clayton Dombroski- Director of Human Resources
- Meridith Olivia- General Counsel
- Paul Piorkowski- Regional Vice President (Rocket Reach, n.d.)

Product/Brand Analysis

Aldi operates as a customer-focused company that prioritizes affordability and quality. They offer a wide variety of grocery and household essential items. The company aims to function as an ally for budget-conscious consumers, who are still looking for high quality products. Aldi's philosophy also includes providing items that cater to specific dietary restrictions and preferences, in addition to meeting sustainability standards. The company's primary brand attributes include simplicity, affordability, quality, and sustainability (Aldi, n.d.).

Aldi's brand personality and positioning revolve around their core concepts of simplicity, affordability, and responsibility. The brand maintains an image as a very simplistic and straightforward shopping experience that allows customers to acquire high-quality products for consistently low prices. Due to the specific offerings of their Aldi exclusive brands, health-consciousness and dietary-friendliness contribute to their brand personality and positioning (Panmore Institute, 2023).

Aldi utilizes a price leadership strategy, consistently offering low prices in comparison to other grocery store chains. According to a study from Aldi, the annual average shopping cost when purchasing exclusively Aldi private label brands in the United States was $6,759. Alternatively, the annual average shopping cost when purchasing brand name products in the United States was $10,610 (Aldi, 2025). As of 2023, Aldi's profit margin was 1.2% (BBC News, 2023).

Aldi utilizes sustainable packaging as a part of its corporate responsibility initiatives. In addition to their initiatives where they encourage consumers to use reusable plastic bags, the company aims to reduce plastic waste and improve recyclability across their product packaging (Aldi, n.d.).

Aldi's distribution model is based on a divisional structure. The company utilizes regional distribution centers to streamline their processes. Aldi currently has 26 divisions across the United States, with the majority of divisions concentrated throughout the East Coast and Midwest (Aldi, n.d.).

Aldi uses several methods throughout their promotions, including social media, email newsletters, and printer advertisements. Aldi's social media presence largely utilizes content marketing, with posts featuring behind-the-scenes content and recipe ideas. Additionally, Aldi has used Influencer Marketing as a promotional tactic (Fabric Academy, 2023). Aldi also frequently provides consumers with weekly or special discounts as a promotional tactic. The majority of Aldi's promotional tactics are centered around their core values of simplicity, consistency, and responsibility. Their various forms of promotions focus on promoting the idea that Aldi provides high-quality products for consistently low prices (Panmore Institute, 2023).

Competitive Analysis

Despite all the changes in the grocery industry, convenient supermarkets still remain as the primary source and destination of grocery shoppers in the U.S. There are new and growing store formats, traditional and non-traditional, that compete with prices and discounts now that consumers are now spending 36% more than they did in 2019. Private label markets are growing and have hit records in sales. According to Nielsen Consumer LLC, 50% of consumer respondents are purchasing more private labels than ever before. "An October report from FMI indicates that 90% of grocers are planning on either moderately or significantly increasing their investment in private-label brands over the next two years" (Wilson, 2025). So expect grocers to continue to lean on their own brands in 2025.This allows for smaller manufacturing supermarkets like ALDI, Costco, and Trader Joe's to focus and ensure quality instead of massive amounts of product options and variety. With the grocery retailing industry there are many varying forms of competition, there's the food service industry where people will go out to fast food restaurants and restaurants in general instead of going to grocery stores to purchase goods. According to the FMI, 5.3% of Americans' disposable income is spent on food at home compared to 5.9% on food away from home. Also what drives most consumers' choices on which grocery store they go to is convenience, distance wise. As stated above, the more the population there is in one area, the higher the demand there is for grocery store locations. With a total number of 45,575 grocery stores in the U.S., there's a weekly sales of $17.32 per square foot of a selling area. And even though 74% of grocery shopping still happens in physical stores, there's also indirect competition like online grocery shopping that might cause consumers to choose the most convenient store to shop from, despite factors like distance, for competitive prices and to save on time. Grocery delivery services have increased by 56% since 2022 (Rodgers, 2024). Depending on what area, there's an average of four groceries stores within a five mile radius. 13% of respondents say that there's less than four in rural areas (Ozbun, 2022). According to the FMI, consumers are spending an average of $112 dollars on groceries online versus $42 dollars per transaction in stores. Studies have shown that consumers are more entertained or "have more fun" online grocery shopping than in person (Hamson, 2024). Aside from distance and convenience of consumers, Aldi's biggest direct competitors are Trader Joe's and Save-a-Lot. Them all being in the same category of limited assortment grocery stores, and also targeting consumers looking for the most discounts of a smaller grocery store. While Kroger, Publix, Wholefoods, Walmart, Costco, and Target are also competitors, they are of different categories of the grocery store sector. The different categories are presented in figure E.

Although Aldi is one of the top brands the U.S. consumers recommend, landing at #4 with 86.2%, Trader Joe's is following close behind at 86.2% as shown in figure A (Marketing Charts, 2020). Both stores have a limited amount of products and private labels, Aldi's has about 90% of its products private and Trader's Joe's at 85%. Both grocery stores have similar target demographics, they're typically younger to middle aged, but Trader Joe's targets a more diverse audience. While products are marketed at a more affordable price, they're prices are relatively higher than Aldi. Trader Joe's offers plastic bagging as well as paper, while Aldi only offers paper or reusable bagging. Trader Joe's also does market well to younger audiences on social media, following and catering to trends. They purposely design they're products in a certain visual style to create a uniqueness to their brand and personality that causes consumers to gravitate and remember them.

Consumer Analysis

According to research done by Statista in late 2024, the majority share of people that shop at Aldi are from the ages of 30-49 years. This middle age demographic consumes 26% of Aldi's target market, while the outlying generations of consumers only take up 24% each. (Figure F) The current target market has slowly declined in sales with the ongoing struggles of national inflation. This has driven the current target market to display trends in fiscal money spending, driving them to Aldi for its cheaper prices rather than consumer experience. These cheaper prices for name-brand, and Aldi brand items are exclusive to Aldi-stores, causing a narrow demographic to consume at locations."According to a survey of U.S. shoppers, ALDI was the grocer most associated with the best value, low everyday prices and quality products. Shoppers said ALDI selection outranked the competition 2:1, and 76% of shoppers said its brands are just as good as more expensive name brands" *(*Aldi, 2024*)*. For Aldi to compete with the rising economic demographic (18-24), Aldi must make accessibility, convenience, and lifestyle prevalent for further marketing ventures. The potential target market are consumers, seeking daily essential items such as vegetables, meat, fruit, or condiments, with an interest in healthy living. These consumers are motivated by their commitment to a healthy lifestyle, while yielding the highest payoff through cheaper prices. This being a common national trend that 63% of independent grocery shoppers expect stores to support them in leading healthier lives (Figure G). This demographic of shoppers has seen increased online interaction, as well as, a consistent prioritization of convenience over quality. Leading them to seek alternative accessibility to their product, such as third party delivery systems, or store-owned amenities that allow the business to profit off of new ventures that this demographic relies on.

From the Macro-sphere, several trends are influencing the current target market of the 30-49 millennials. Demographically, this market has seen trends of rising environmental consciousness, reducing food waste, and overly favoring locally sourced products to support sustainability. Nevertheless, they are prominently drawn to businesses that provide lower-than-average prices for quality meats and produce due to national trends of economic instability. Other extenuating factors may include a business's aesthetics, attentive staff, and efficient shopping environment. For the current target market, these factors heavily influence where they consume, as this particular group is highly committed to making responsible choices for their health and the environment. "When considering where to shop for groceries, Independents, shoppers value low prices, quality meats and produce, friendly staff, cleanliness, and offering locally grown produce and other packaged goods" (Figure H). The overall social trends in the U.S. grocery sector have revealed a rise in demand for convenience, with more and more shoppers preferring options like delivery and curbside pickup. "Convenience is the main reason for shopping online for groceries, while the need to see items and concerns about freshness are the biggest barriers to online shopping" (Figure I). This shift from in-person grocery shopping has been driven by the desire to save time and reduce effort. Companies have adapted by expanding their online presence or offering seamless pickup or drop-off services. Aldi has responded to this trend by implementing more accessible shopping solutions that cater to their customers' modern, convenience-driven lifestyles.

SWOT

Strengths

- Affordable, high quality products
    - The company states that they value simplicity in order to keep costs low, consistency to offer high quality products, and responsibility in terms of minimizing their environmental impact.
- Healthy options for health conscious shoppers
    - More than 90% of the products sold by Aldi belong to one of the company's three exclusive brands: Simply Nature, Live G Free, and Specially Selected. All products from each of these brands are guaranteed to to contain no synthetic colors, no MSG added, and no added trans fats.
- Sustainably sourced
    - Aldi utilizes sustainable packaging as a part of its corporate responsibility initiatives. In addition to their initiatives where they encourage consumers to use reusable plastic bags, the company aims to reduce plastic waste and improve recyclability across their product packaging
- The average annual shopping costs in buying Aldi exclusive brands is about $4000 cheaper than the annual average shopping costs in buying name brands
- Aldi offers promotions through social media advertisements as well as in store deals
    - Aldi uses several methods throughout their promotions, including social media, email newsletters, and printer advertisements. Aldi's social media presence largely utilizes content marketing, with posts featuring behind-the-scenes content and recipe ideas. Additionally, Aldi has used Influencer Marketing as a

promotional tactic (Fabric Academy). Aldi also frequently provides consumers with weekly or special discounts as a promotional tactic.

Weaknesses

- Although Aldi has a distribution model based on divisional structure, the sheer amount of stores in comparison to other major streamline competitors is significantly smaller
- Aldi exclusive brands are not the first choice for many shoppers as annual sales for name brands are higher, likely due to brand awareness
    - For brand popularity in the U.S., Walmart is in the lead with 97% brand awareness, followed by Target at 94%, and ALDI at 82%

Opportunities

- Inflation in the United States and consumer perception of high grocery prices
    - Today, shoppers are spending 36% more than they did in 2019, 87% of them are adjusting their purchasing habits to try to navigate the financially challenging landscape to save on their budget
- National increase in strive for eating healthier
    - 63% of independent grocery shoppers expect stores to support them in leading healthier lives
- National shift towards the usage of sustainable practices
    - We are seeing trends of rising environmental consciousness, reducing food waste, and overly favoring locally sourced products to support sustainability with the millennial generation

Threats

- Inflation in the United States and inability to pay for groceries

- Increase in usage of digital shopping and pick up or delivery of groceries
  - Grocery delivery services have increased by 56% since 2022
  - Studies have shown that consumers are more entertained or “have more fun” online grocery shopping than in person
- Commitments consumers have to other grocery stores due to accessibility
  - This accessibility issue can cause some shoppers to go to competitors, despite Aldi's growing brand awareness at 82%.

Opportunity Recommendation for Research

Aldi has a location shortage in the United States with 2,464 stores total. Although the stores do offer competitive prices, their lack of locations makes for a problem for the brand. Opportunities for the brand include opening new locations and advertising stronger to let consumers know about their competitive prices, making it worthwhile to travel to their locations. Due to boundaries with development of new stores and reworking the distribution model, the opportunity most worthy of marketing research is the increase in advertising. Research of the target group will help resolve current problems and create new solutions for Aldi, as once we know consumers' primary motives for choosing grocery stores to shop at, Aldi can shift their strategy in creating new opportunities for success that appeals to those motives. With that being said, although advertising can influence consumers, it may not be practical enough to address and solve the problem of consumers choosing other stores, simply due to convenience and location. Further research may indicate the direct effects of advertising and the influence it has on grocery shoppers choices.

Research Problem Statements

After initial secondary research, it has become apparent that Aldi must shift its target audience to the 18-24 age group, the rising top spenders, in response to ongoing inflation. This group prioritizes convenience over cost, leading to increased online consumer interaction for grocery shopping. However, Aldi's limited number of locations in local communities has driven this demographic to seek out alternative grocery shopping options, which may hinder Aldi's ability to capture this market fully. The challenge lies in understanding how this audience's preference for convenience and online behavior impacts their decision to shop at Aldi, particularly in areas where store accessibility is an issue.

To address this issue, further research is needed to gather direct insights from the target group. While secondary research provides some understanding, this demographic's unique characteristics and opinions require deeper exploration through primary research.

Specific informational needs include first-hand accounts from 18-24-year-olds about their shopping trends, perceptions of Aldi, and their preferences for convenience in grocery shopping. A combination of qualitative research methods, such as focus groups or interviews, alongside quantitative data collection, will offer a comprehensive understanding of this audience's shopping behaviors and how Aldi can adjust its strategies to better align with their expectations.

Proposed Questions for Qualitative Research

Specification

1. What mode of transportation do you prefer when travelling to the grocery store?
2. How loyal are you to your current grocery store?

Structural

1. Is a business's overall aesthetic and atmosphere an important thing to you?
2. What do you look for when choosing a grocery store?

Grand tour

1. Walk me through your preparation for a grocery shopping trip.

Idealization

1. Please describe the ideal amount you would spend on groceries.

Hypothetical Interaction

1. If you were to forget something at the grocery store, what would you do to get it?

Third- Person

2. Are you an independent shopper?
3. Are you comfortable with how far you travel to buy your groceries?
4. Are you more drawn to the price or quality of your meat/produce?
5. Have you ever used an online grocer-method?
6. Have you ever used instacart?
    - Was it more convenient?
    - Did you have a similar shopping experience to in-person?
7. Please describe the ideal amount you would spend on groceries. with how much you generally spend on your groceries?
8. Which prefer buying generic brands or name brands?
9. Do you know where Aldi is in St. Augustine?
10. Where do you normally buy your groceries? What do you like about your grocery store?

How often do you buy something at the grocery store that you had no formally planned on buying?

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Appendices

Figure A

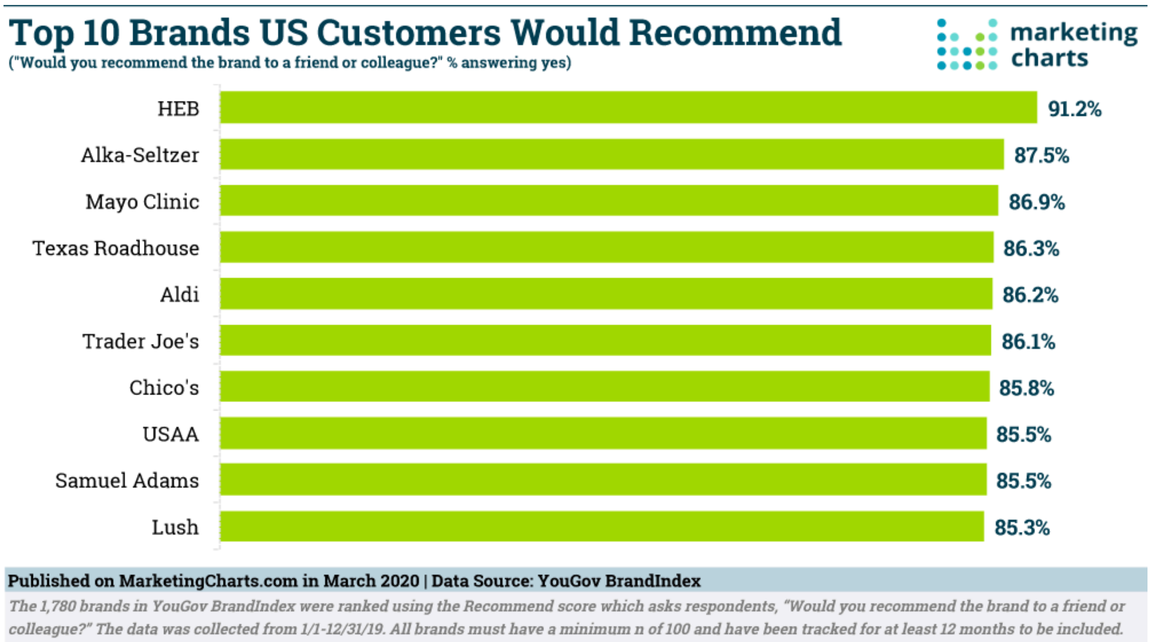

Figure B

Figure C

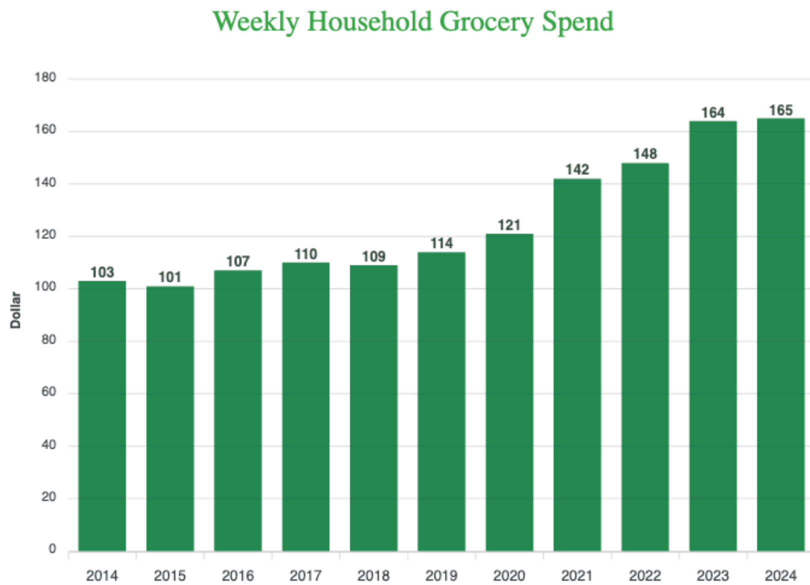

Figure D

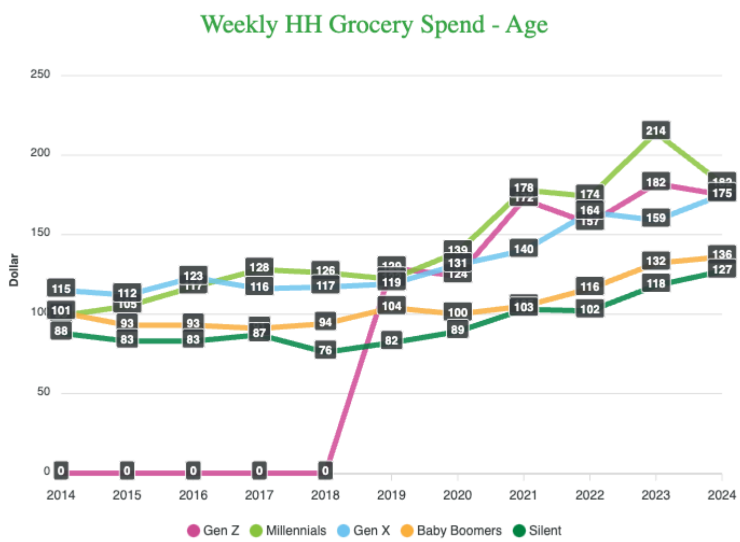

Figure E

Table 1: Selected Grocery Stores in the U.S. Grocery Sector

Firm	Industry	Segment
Kroger	Traditional grocery	Conventional supermarkets
Publix	Traditional grocery	Conventional supermarkets
Safeway	Traditional grocery	Conventional supermarkets
Albertsons	Traditional grocery	Conventional supermarkets
HE Butt Grocery Co.	Traditional grocery	Conventional supermarkets
Wegmans Food Markets Inc.	Traditional grocery	Conventional supermarkets
WinCo Foods Inc. (Waremart)	Traditional grocery	Conventional supermarkets
Whole Foods	Traditional grocery	Natural grocer[1]
Sprouts Farmers Market	Traditional grocery	Natural grocer[1]
The Fresh Market	Traditional grocery	Natural grocer[1]
Trader Joe's	Traditional grocery	Limited assortment grocery stores[2]
Aldi	Traditional grocery	Limited assortment grocery stores[2]
Save-a-Lot Food Stores	Traditional grocery	Limited assortment grocery stores[2]
Smart & Final Stores Inc.	Traditional grocery	Super warehouse
Food4Less	Traditional grocery	Super warehouse
Walmart Supercenter	Non-traditional grocery	Supercenter
Target Supercenter	Non-traditional grocery	Supercenter
Meijer Inc.	Non-traditional grocery	Supercenter
Costco	Non-traditional grocery	Wholesale club
Sam's Club	Non-traditional grocery	Wholesale club
BJ's Wholesale Club Inc.	Non-traditional grocery	Wholesale club
Dollar General	Non-traditional grocery	Dollar stores
Dollar Tree	Non-traditional grocery	Dollar stores
Walmart	Non-traditional grocery	Mass merchandiser
Target	Non-traditional grocery	Mass merchandiser
Walgreens	Non-traditional grocery	Drug stores
CVS	Non-traditional grocery	Drug stores

Source: Prepared by authors based on classifications from different sources, including Food Processing (2016), Blankenship and Schill (2017), Danzinger (2020), and Sundaram (2022).
[1] Also known as fresh format stores.
[2] Also known as discount grocery stores.

Figure F

Figure G

Figure H

Figure I