Quantitative Research: Aldi

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Contents

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This research paper examines the grocery shopping behaviors, preferences, and perceptions of 18-24-year-old college students in relation to Aldi, a grocer retailer known for its low prices and private label products. The study was conducted in order to help Aldi better understand and reach this target demographic. Prior qualitative and secondary research revealed that this demographic values convenience, cost efficiency, product quality, and brand familiarity, and prefers one-stop shopping. In previous research, Aldi was found to be perceived as affordable and high quality, but faced challenges related to limited store locations, limited product range, and low brand recognition among younger consumers.

In order to validate and generalize these qualitative findings, quantitative research was conducted. A web-based questionnaire was distributed through Flagler College communications channels, resulting in 86 completed responses. The survey included 27 questions and covered a range of variables, such as price sensitivity, brand loyalty, product availability, and advertising influence. The response rate was 91.5%, with each survey taking approximately 8-10 minutes to complete.

Analysis of the data showed a strong correlation between brand loyalty and customer satisfaction. Respondents who identified as extremely loyal to Aldi were also most satisfied with their shopping experiences and most likely to recommend Aldi to others. In contrast, those who were less loyal generally perceived Aldi as inexpensive but mid-quality and mid-variety, with some members of this group even strongly disagreeing that Aldi offers affordable prices.

Analysis of the data related to consumer spending behavior amongst respondents showed that the majority shop once per week, spending an average of $68.80. While Aldi ranked as one of the more frequently visited stores, it was still outplaced by Walmart, Target, and Publix. When evaluating factors that contributed to consumers grocery shopping decision making, respondents ranked competitive pricing, product availability, and quality as the most influential factors. Advertising was found to have minimal impact on shopping decisions, with the majority of respondents attributing only 0-10% of their choices to grocery stores' marketing efforts.

This quantitative research offers a clearer understanding of the shopping behaviors and attitudes of the 18-24-year-old college student demographic. With a focus on which factors this demographic prioritizes when choosing a grocery store, these insights provide Aldi with data to better tailor its marketing and operational strategies to meet the expectations and needs of younger consumers.

Quantitative Research

Introduction

Prior to this stage of research, qualitative research was conducted through a focus group, as well as secondary research. Through conducting qualitative research, we have better understood the target audience, college students, ages 18-24, habits and attitudes toward grocery shopping and Aldi. However, through quantitative research surveying, we expect to be able to better generalize the target audience's habits and attitudes towards grocery shopping and Aldi through descriptive statistics.

The target market for this quantitative research is 18-24 year old college students, as they are the rising top group of spenders in the shopping market. Aldi needs to better understand this target audience as they are willing to spend, even through inflation, but only at more affordable prices. The target audience is justified as a focus for research as college students are in need of groceries, and are willing to spend, but at affordable prices.

Prior qualitative research has indicated that convenience, cost efficiency, product quality, and brand familiarity are the primary factors that influence the grocery shopping habits and behaviors of the identified demographic. Additionally, qualitative research identified behavioral trends, including the demographic's preference for one-stop shopping, a lack of responsiveness to traditional advertising, and a lack of interest in online grocery shopping/delivery services. The prior research indicated that while Aldi is generally seen as an affordable and high quality grocery store, they face challenges in regards to store accessibility, the range of their product offerings, and brand familiarity among younger consumers. The company's low prices are attractive to this demographic, however they lack the convenience in terms of their limited number of locations and their smaller scale of product offerings.

Through quantitative research, we expect to better generalize these findings through descriptive statistics that will give the client a better understanding of the target audience's habitual trends. With this being said, we plan on conducting a survey distributed to a population proportion of over 80 college students to collect data that helps us complete these findings.

Problem Statement

Aldi’s motivating factors for this quantitative research is to understand consumer shopping habits of college students, ages 18-24, in regards to grocery store shopping. The client is interested in consumer lifestyle and attitudinal trends that may influence shopping decisions amongst the audience. The target audience is of interest to the client, as this group is the rising top spenders in the market. Quantitative research is justified in attempting to understand statistics for college students shopping habits in relation to the brand and its current audience. Research of the target audience is recommended and will be used to further understand the habits that influence grocery shopping decisions, in turn, the client will be able to better market towards this audience to gain them as consumers.

Research Objectives

The objective of this quantitative research study is to better understand the sample, college aged students ages 18-24, attitudes towards the client, Aldi, and other competitors in the grocery store market. This research aims to better understand patterns and habits of shoppers in this target audience. Through distributing and analyzing a survey, we expect to understand the target audience's attitudes towards Aldi through descriptive statistics. Specifically, the statistics will help us understand consumer attitudes towards Aldi's pricing, products, marketing and convenience within the grocery store market. Through quantitative research, in the medium of a survey, we plan to learn more about the current shopping experience of college age shoppers, as well as the ideal shopping experience, with factors of price, convenience, availability of product, and advertising efforts being considered. \\

Concepts of Interest

The primary concepts of interest for this research study are attitudes towards Aldi and habits while grocery shopping. These concepts were originally identified as the most valuable to research for the client, as attitudes and habits amongst shoppers most influence shopping decisions. The first concept of interest, being consumers' attitudes towards Aldi, can be conceptually defined as a predisposition to respond in a favorable or unfavorable manner to the grocery store chain, Aldi. This may include brand image, shopping experience or products and pricing. As for operational definition of this concept of interest, favorable or unfavorable attitudes will be evidence from the dimensions of the conducted survey. The second concept of interest is consumers' habits while grocery shopping. Conceptually, this concept of interest can be defined as habitual actions displayed during the action of shopping. This may include methods of shopping, amount of stores visited, factors considered while shopping, store preference, amount of time spent shopping, and amount normally spent while shopping. This concept's operational definition can be defined as behaviors prompted automatically when taking part in the grocery shopping process. We will examine each of these concepts in our quantitative research, and reach a more generalized understanding of the concepts, through surveying data collected.

Research Methods

After conducting previous qualitative research, it was concluded that quantitative research findings were needed to uncover further insights into consumer behavior among individuals aged 18-24. Unlike qualitative data, which describes data, quantitative data allows us to codify findings through statistics, enabling a statistical generalization of a larger group within the 18-24 year old demographic.

The survey type chosen for this study was a web survey, selected for its data collection capabilities, quick communication, and compatibility with our target audience. Participants are less likely to experience peer pressure, as the survey offers privacy, encouraging honest answers. Bias is also minimized through quantitative scale questionnaires, reducing subjective interpretations common in qualitative research. Alternative survey methods such as telephone, mail, and personal interviews were deemed impractical due to time constraints and incompatibility with our target audience. Telephone surveys would have prevented the presentation of visuals, while mail surveys would have likely resulted in lower response rates and a longer data collection period. Personal interviews would have been more time-consuming and required hiring professionals, incurring additional costs. Verbal answers would have also restricted the use of Likert scale questions, which were significant in our research. Moreover, the younger demographic is generally less receptive to telephone surveys compared to older age groups (Ryan, 2024). It was concluded that distributing an anonymous web questionnaire was the most accurate and efficient method to reach our audience and gather data. This type of quantitative research was necessary to gain more in-depth clarity essential for understanding our problem statement regarding consumer habits and behavior. Quantitative research allows for a system of measurement through consumer perceptions across a large range of participants, as well as hypothesis testing in Aldi shopping preferences and behavior. Other key metrics include price sensitivity, brand preferences, and brand loyalty. With the addition of quantitative data, patterns can be validated and analyzed further with a clear structure.

The web survey was distributed through an anonymous link to students and peers on Flagler College Campus, mainly through the communications department. The survey link was sent to professors to distribute among their students, as well as shared on Flagler College Community social media and group chats. This approach was the most practical for distributing surveys and collecting data due to its cost efficiency, speed, questionnaire quality, and data verification. Participants could access the survey at their convenience without a prior process, providing them with freedom, flexibility in pacing, and the option to opt out. This is an advantage in web surveys, as our younger demographic can be unpredictable, but the survey's response rate turned out to be high. In total, we recorded approximately 86 anonymous responses from students. The survey was conducted for about 5 days, with a response rate of 91.5%, and the average time spent on the survey was about 8-10 minutes.

Key questionnaire constructs included measuring price sensitivity, quality perception, opinions on private labels, and brand loyalty. These question types were chosen and designed to focus on tracking behavior and choices. Participants were asked to rank factors they perceived as most important: price, product variety, speed, environment, and quality. The survey contained a total of about 27 questions designed to fully understand consumer opinions on grocery shopping and Aldi specifically. The survey had a clear layout and visual, unambiguous tones and framing, and easy-to-understand language. Every questionnaire type was included in the survey, such as nominal, ordinal, interval, and ratio, ranging from exhaustive and exclusive depending on the question. Specific question types such as rank order, classification, Likert scale, bipolar, ratio, constant sum, checklist, multiple choice, open-ended, and dichotomous were also included, ensuring the research was inclusive of all potential factors leading to understanding consumer behavior on a structural and statistical level. Building on our past qualitative research, we sought more insights into how the target audience's choices relate back to their rationale. Beginning with simple questions and progressing to more complex ones, the questions' complexity aims at easing the participant to give truthful explanations about their opinions of Aldi and how Aldi can enhance their brand. More specifically, the open-ended question about how much each participant spent on each grocery trip allowed for an unbiased, uninfluenced answer by prespecified lists, targeting their general attitude towards grocery store advertisements, how honestly they believe their influence is, and what they believe are Aldi’s strengths and weaknesses.

Participants were recruited by distribution through peers, predominantly in Flagler communications student communities and classes. Through our screen questions and full consent, participants were ensured to be in the specific age group of 18-24 before continuing with the rest of the survey. This included screener questions that concerned their age, their education status (if they were enrolled in college), if they grocery shop for themselves, and if they’ve ever shopped at Aldi before. The screener questions were mainly nominal questions for simplicity and easy pattern recognition. Acting as a gate, the screen eliminates all of those that don’t possess the characteristics that we need for this study. The main body followed an organized format from simple to complex (nominal to ratio), targeting all the key points of product, price, convenience (distance and time), and advertising for all potential areas of opportunity and data collection. Multiple-choice questions that were asked like, how many times a participant visits a grocery store in a week, allowed for easy coding and flexibility. Checklist questions provided all considerations of factors that affect consumer behavior. Scaling/rating questions like Likert and bipolar were limited to ratings from 1-5, (strongly disagree to strongly agree) to prevent too much space for ambiguity and gaps in clear research. These questions possess all features of nominal and ordinal question types while providing an estimate of the relative distance and frame of reference. Ratio questions determine the standing of each participant's answers and also possess all descriptive power of nominal, ordinal, as well as interval measures. Following the screener and the main body of the survey, more classification questions were also asked for more insight into the demographics of the participants. This includes classification of gender, specifically what year of college they’re in, if they drive or own a vehicle, if the participants were employed, and most importantly if they live on/off campus or with family. These are all important questions to the Aldi consumer behavior study and analytics. They provided means for examining subgroups within this large sample of participants. Out of 86 participants, 60 of them were female and were around the sophomore/junior class of college. There was quite a difference in their level of brand preference between big-name grocery stores. A lot of them have at least shopped at Aldi but would consider themselves to be completely loyal to the brand.

Findings

From the survey we can determine the overall shopping experience of consumers in the 18-24 demographic, who are currently attending college and shop for their own groceries. After crosstabing, we can determine that there is a correlation between those who are most loyal to Aldi as their grocery store, and those that have a high satisfaction with the store itself.(Figure O) According to Q7 “How would you describe your brand loyalty to Aldi?” 9/65 of the respondents are “extremely loyal” to Aldi (Figure C). Within that group, all but one answered that they are the most satisfied with Aldi (Figure A). Alternatively, all of this group responded that they were most likely to recommend Aldi to their friends and family. (Figure B)

Yet the remaining 39.3% of respondents that are not as loyal to Aldi seem to have a recurring correlation of opinions that Aldi is a cheap, yet, mid-quality and mid-variety business. According to a cross tabulation between the respondents that were slightly and not at all loyal, and a predetermined answer likert question. Shows that a majority rated Aldi as inexpensive, mid-quality and mid-variety. (Figure D) Similarly, this unloyal percentage of respondents showed a trend when rating which statements they would agree with. For this level of description, we chose to use a matrix style question, with qualitative values rather than numerical, so respondents could make ratings based on their natural opinions. Based on cross tabulation with loyalty, we found that 30-70% of unloyal consumers would somewhat disagree that Aldi is a clean, variable, convenient establishment. Respondents also somewhat disagreed with Aldi having good customer service, and a positive brand reputation. However, there was an outlier during this tabulation between the unloyal group of respondents and statements surrounding Aldi. Over 70.9% of this group of respondents “strongly disagreed” with Aldi having affordable prices. (Figure M).

Through a cross tabulation analysis of questions that surround the shopping experience of our respondents, Aldi is able to better conceptualize what draws and rejects this demographic. By using the rate of loyalty from respondents, Aldi can easily determine the shopping experience of loyal and unloyal consumers in this demographic. Loyal consumers in the desired demographic appear to be extremely satisfied with their shopping experience at Aldi, and are most likely to recommend shopping at Aldi to their immediate friends and family. However, the comparatively unloyal percentage of this demographic, appears to have reservations with their shopping experience at Aldi. Responding that Aldi has mid-quality, mid-variety, and non-affordable prices.

Through cross tabulation between the respondents grocery shopping frequency, and their expenditure, Aldi can determine how often the highest spending respondents go grocery shopping. Through frequency analysis, a large majority of the respondents (65.7%) only visit a grocery store once a week. While only two respondents visit a grocery store more than four times (3.0%). (Figure F) Alternatively, 16 responded that they spend an average of $100 each week on groceries. Overall, the average amount spent on groceries a week amounted to $61.80. (Figure G) Through cross-analysis, the percentage of respondents that spend over the average on groceries only visit grocery stores 1-2 times a week.

Due to this trend of infrequent grocery store trips, Aldi must determine what stores this demographic has visited more often in the past year. From frequency analysis, Aldi can determine that they are one of the most consumed at grocery stores that the desired demographic has shopped at in the past year. Aldi ranks 4th, above other organizations like “Winn Dixie”, yet below companies such as “Walmart, Target, and Publix”. (Figure E)

Similarly, Aldi needed to measure what qualities and characteristics influenced the desired demographics decision making when grocery shopping. To measure this, Aldi used a constant sum question to easily display how our demographic weighs the importance of each part of decision making. From close frequency analysis, it becomes evident that respondents view characteristics such as “competitive pricing, product availability, and quality” as equally influential. Contributing 20% of their shopping habits towards each quality. However, over-half of respondents claimed that “advertising” only influenced 0-10% of their shopping habits. (Figure M)

Finally, to measure the opinions shared by this specific demographic, Aldi laid out a likert scale question that allows the respondents to directly conceptualize their opinions towards Aldi. From frequency analysis, it is evident that a majority of respondents seem to be unloyal to shopping name brands. As well as, very mindful of a store's competitive pricing, especially when grocery shopping. (Figure N)

From this Aldi determines that the shopping habits of consumers in the desired demographic, appear to be concerned with the value of their money. As previously stated, a large majority of respondents are willing to spend upwards of $100 on groceries per week, but only on 1-2 trips. Within these trips to the grocery store, the respondents do not respond well to advertising, but do care about characteristics such as competitive pricing, quality, and variety.

Through this extensive analysis of the desired demographics, shopping habits and experience, Aldi can conclude that they do not seem influenced by grocery store advertisements. For Aldi to attract this demographic, the business must first understand what is repelling them. Through cross tabulation between the respondents source of advertising and how influential they are Aldi can identify, what platforms draw the most attention. Based on light analysis, it appears that 26 (40%) respondents replied that advertisements can be only “slightly influential” on their grocery shopping habits. (Figure J) attaining the previous observation. Similarly, respondents provided where they normally see grocery store advertisements, with 38 seeing them in commercials and 36 seeing them on social media. Meaning that the desired demographic, while not favorable to grocery advertising, is apparent to digital media advertising (Figure H). With three respondents crediting this platform. However, the remaining 20 respondents that are only slightly influenced by grocery advertisements, will see them mostly in commercials. Meaning that, social media advertising may make a bigger impact on the demographic, but commercial advertising will reach more consumers.

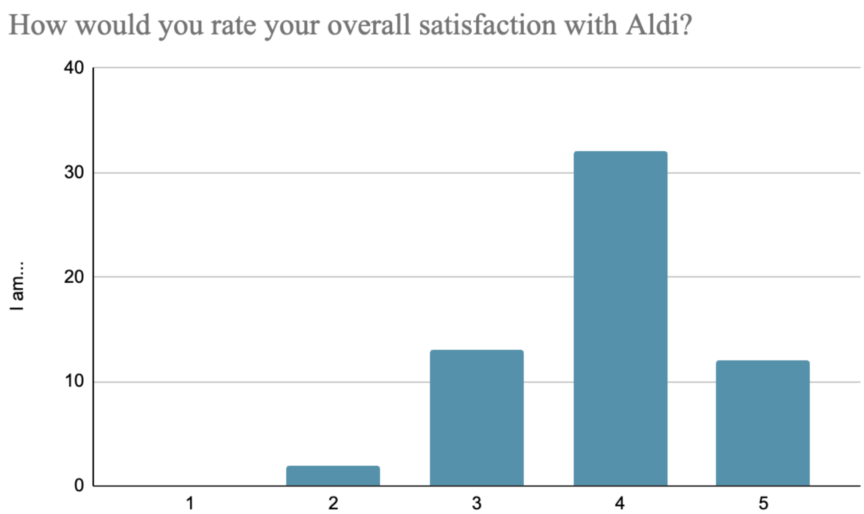
To further determine how the desired demographic responds and ranks advertising when it comes to their shopping habits at Aldi, specifically. Through frequency analysis, it becomes apparent that the most popular ranking of characteristics is as follows; "competitive pricing, convenience, quality, product availability, advertising" (Figure I) making competitive pricing the most influenced by their shopping at Aldi, and Aldi's current advertising did not. Similarly, Aldi ran an analysis of attitudes towards grocery store advertisements in general, with the average qualitative response being "good and positive" yet when presented with the phrase "favorable" respondents ranked advertisements as only mildly favorable. (Figure K)

Bibliography

Ryan, Tom. (2024). Are Online or Phone Surveys Better? Retrieved from www.retailwire.com/discussion/are-online-or-phone-surveys-better/#:~:text=reach%20younger%20audiences

Appendices

Figure A:



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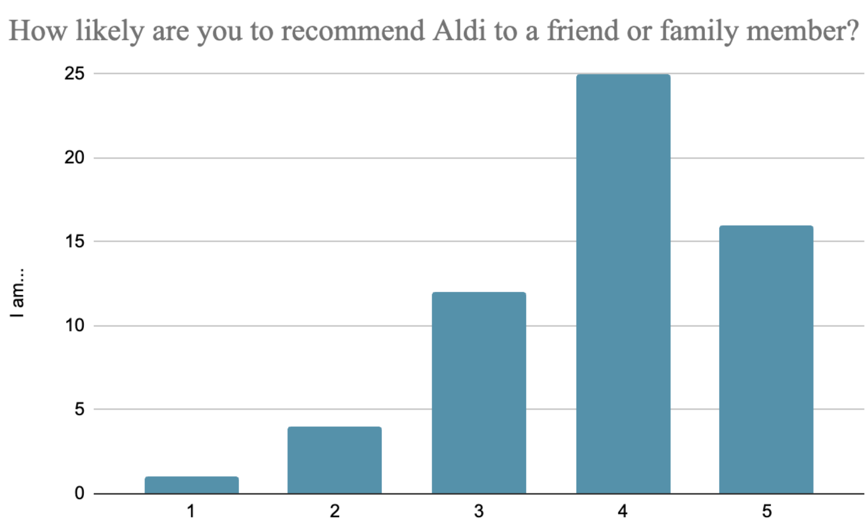

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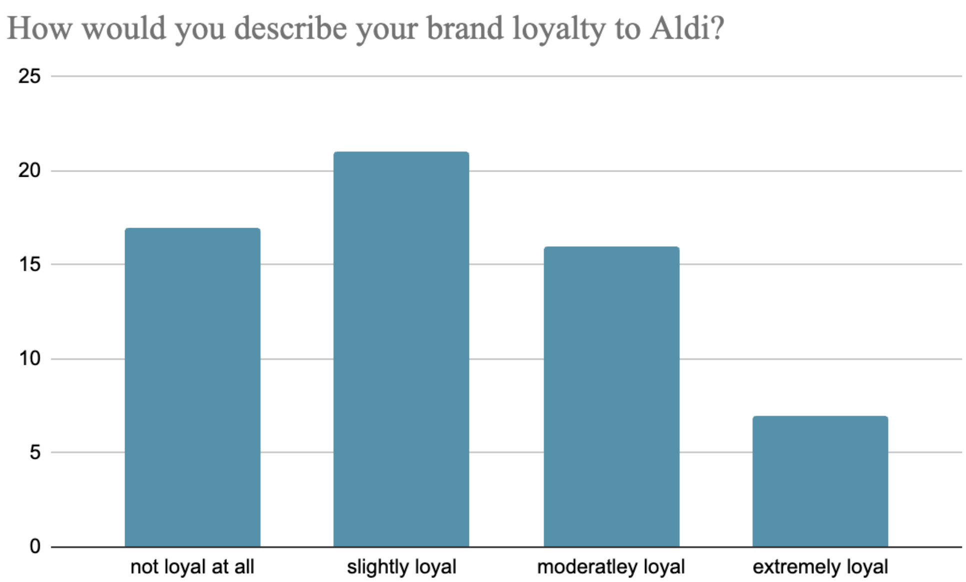


<u>Figure D:</u>

<u>Figure E:</u>

Figure F:

Figure G:

Figure H:

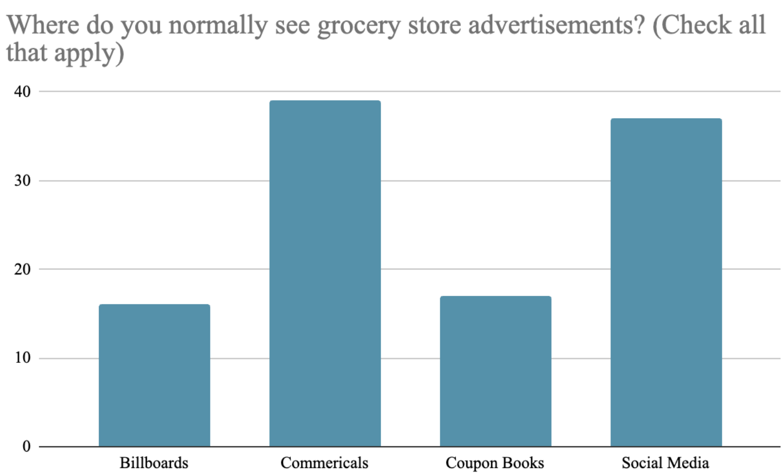


Figure I:

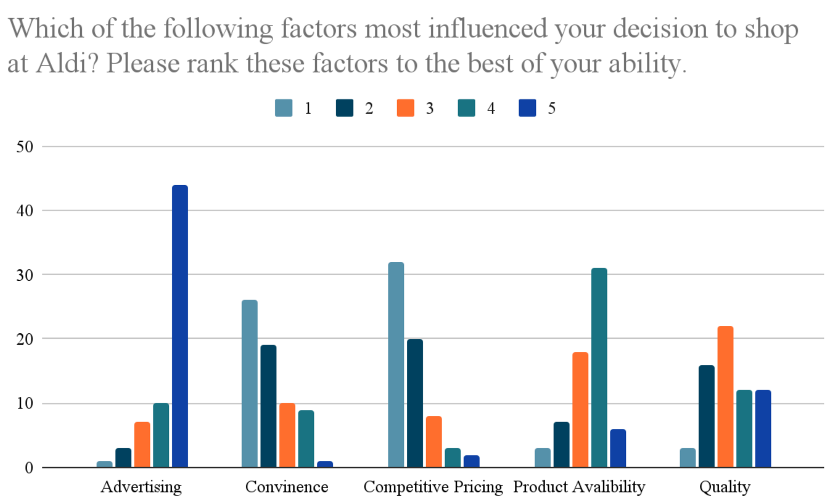
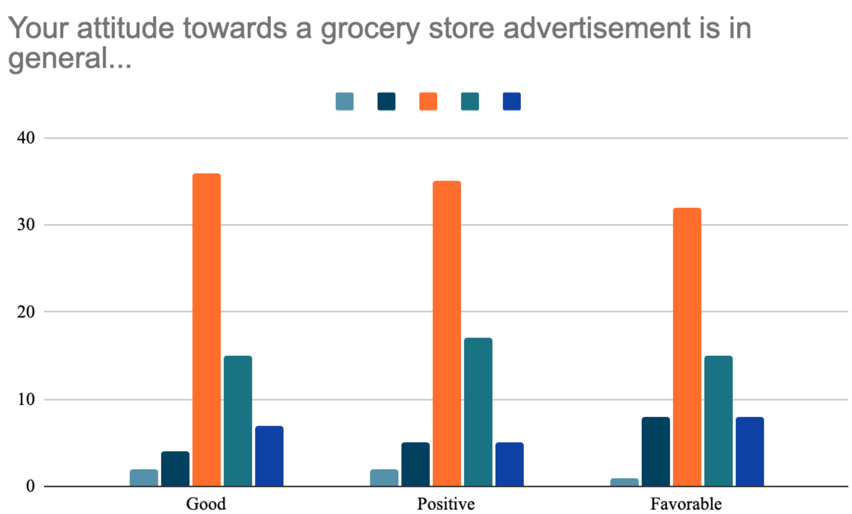


Figure J:

Figure K:



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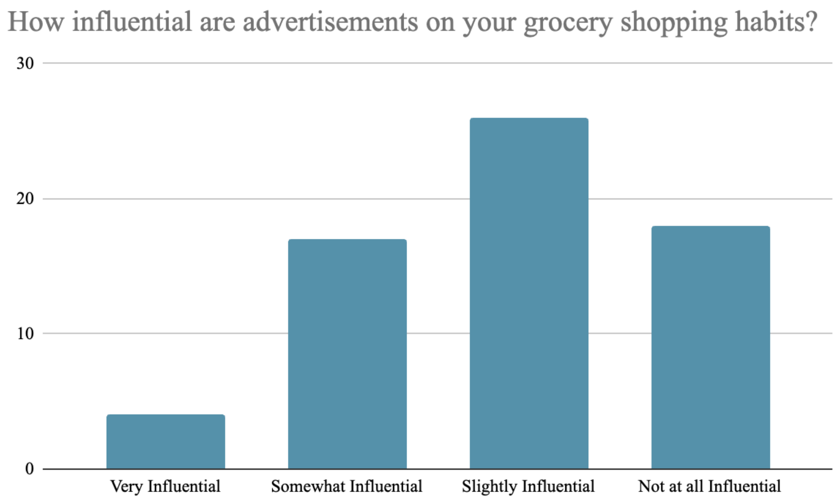

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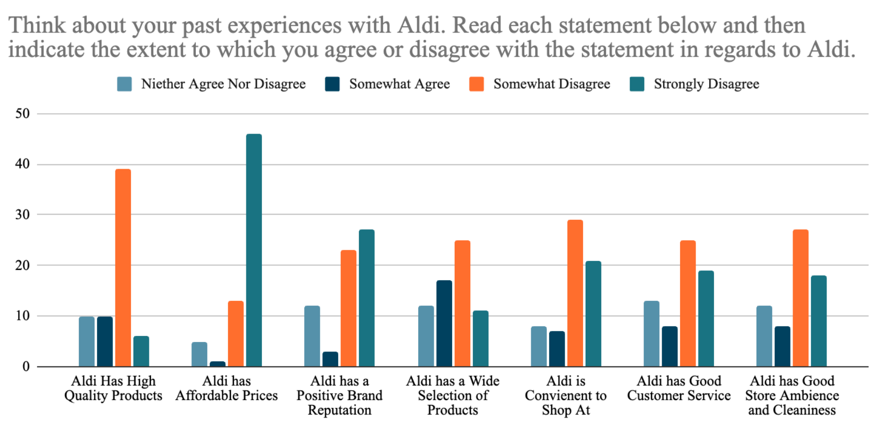

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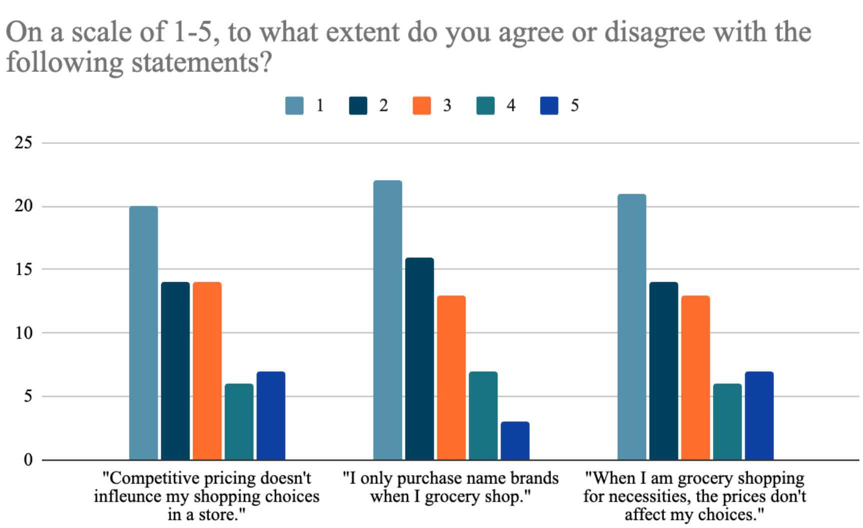
Figure N:

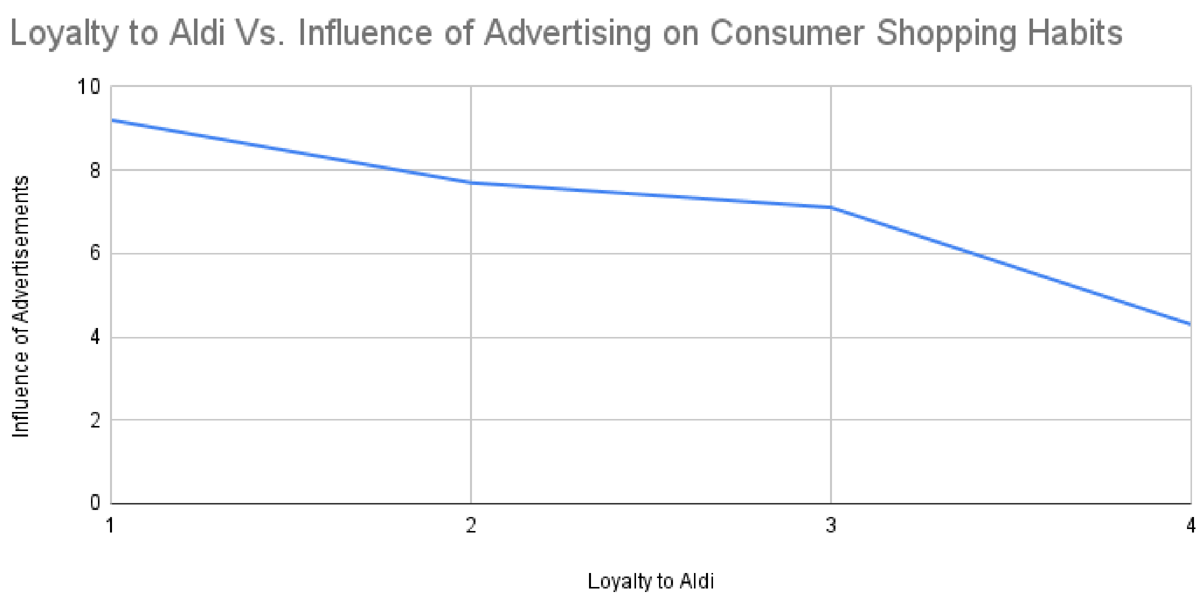


Crosstabs Charts:

Figure O:

			7: How would you describe your brand loyalty to Aldi?				
			Total	Not loyal at all - I rarely sh	Slightly loyal - I sometime	Moderatly loyal - I regularl	Extremely loyal - I always s
16: Think about your past experiences with Aldi. Read each statement below and then indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the statement in regards to Aldi.	Total Count		65.0	19.0	21.0	16.0	9.0
	Aldi has high quality products.	Neither Agree nor Disagree	10.0	5.0	2.0	2.0	1.0
		Somewhat Agree	10.0	6.0	4.0	0.0	0.0
		Somewhat Disagree	39.0	7.0	13.0	13.0	6.0
		Strongly Disagree	6.0	1.0	2.0	1.0	2.0
	Aldi has affordable prices.	Neither Agree nor Disagree	5.0	3.0	1.0	1.0	0.0
		Somewhat Agree	1.0	1.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
		Somewhat Disagree	13.0	7.0	3.0	2.0	1.0
		Strongly Disagree	46.0	8.0	17.0	13.0	8.0
	Aldi has a positive brand reputation.	Neither Agree nor Disagree	12.0	7.0	3.0	2.0	0.0
		Somewhat Agree	3.0	3.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
		Somewhat Disagree	23.0	4.0	10.0	7.0	2.0
		Strongly Disagree	27.0	5.0	8.0	7.0	7.0
	Aldi has a wide selection of products.	Neither Agree nor Disagree	12.0	2.0	5.0	5.0	0.0
		Somewhat Agree	17.0	6.0	4.0	4.0	3.0
		Somewhat Disagree	25.0	9.0	9.0	6.0	1.0
		Strongly Disagree	11.0	2.0	3.0	1.0	5.0
	Aldi is convenient to shop at	Neither Agree nor Disagree	8.0	1.0	5.0	2.0	0.0
		Somewhat Agree	7.0	6.0	0.0	1.0	0.0
		Somewhat Disagree	29.0	10.0	11.0	7.0	1.0
		Strongly Disagree	21.0	2.0	5.0	6.0	8.0
	Aldi has good customer service	Neither Agree nor Disagree	13.0	5.0	5.0	3.0	0.0
		Somewhat Agree	8.0	6.0	1.0	1.0	0.0
		Somewhat Disagree	25.0	4.0	9.0	11.0	1.0
		Strongly Disagree	19.0	4.0	6.0	1.0	8.0
	Aldi's has good store ambience and cleanliness	Neither Agree nor Disagree	12.0	2.0	4.0	5.0	1.0
		Somewhat Agree	8.0	3.0	4.0	1.0	0.0
		Somewhat Disagree	27.0	7.0	9.0	9.0	2.0
		Strongly Disagree	18.0	7.0	4.0	1.0	6.0

Figure S:



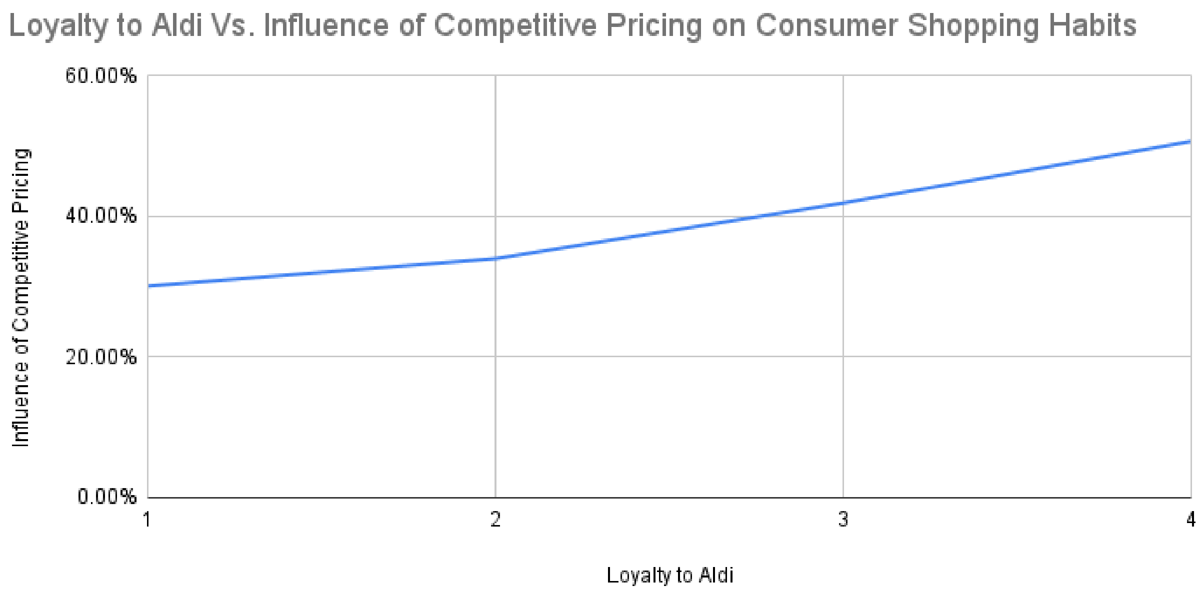
Not at all Loyal (1)- Average influence: 9.2%

Slightly Loyal (2)- Average influence: 7.7%

Moderately Loyal (3)- Average influence: 7.1%

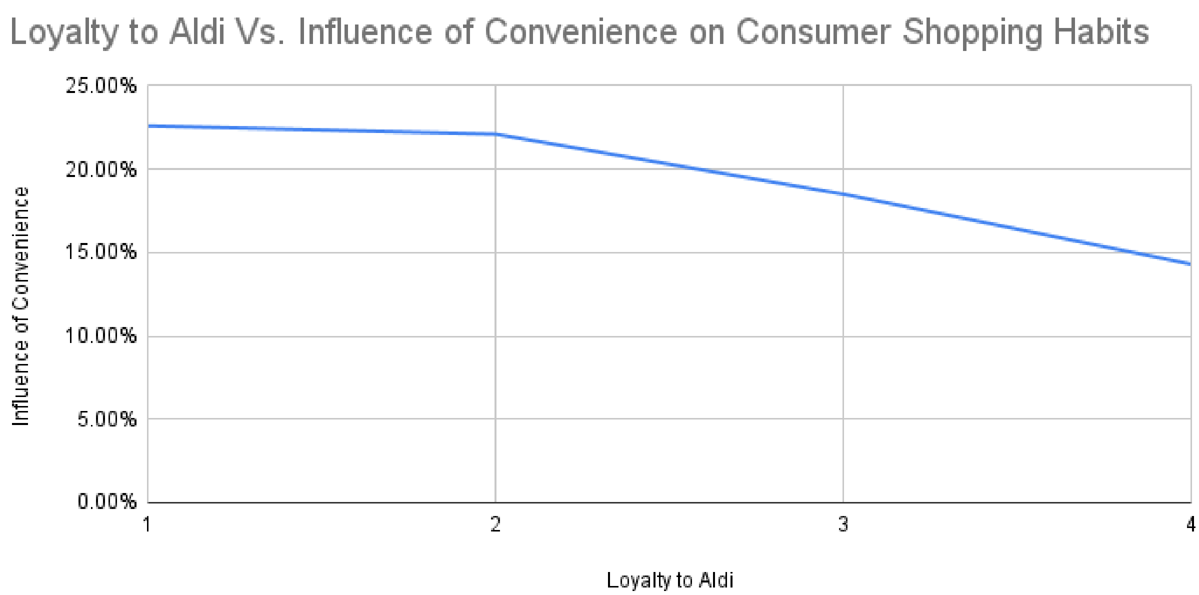
Extremely Loyal (4)- Average influence: 4.3%

Figure T:



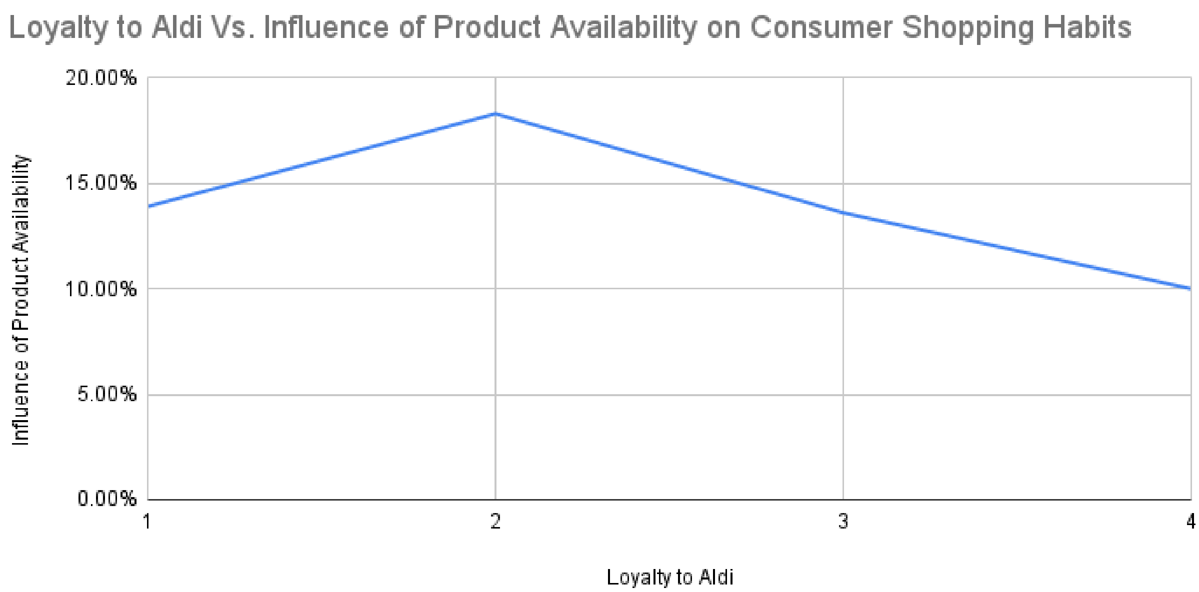
Not at all Loyal (1)- Average influence: 30.1%
Slightly Loyal (2)- Average influence: 34.0%
Moderately Loyal (3)- Average influence: 49.1%
Extremely Loyal (4)- Average influence: 50.7%

Figure U:



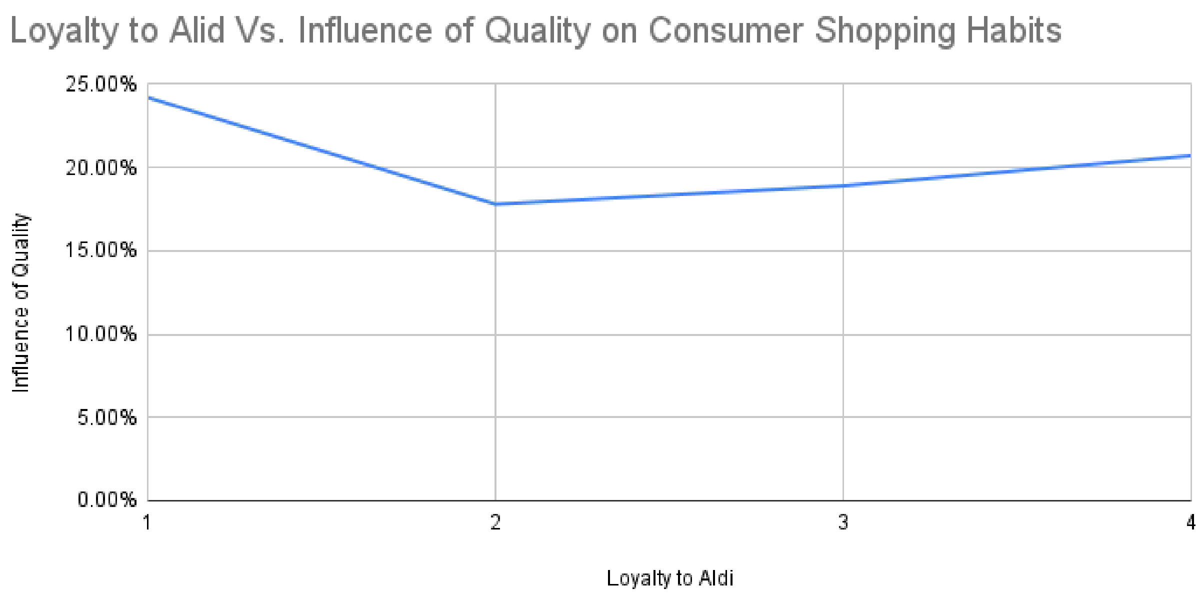
Not at all Loyal (1)- Average influence: 22.6%
Slightly Loyal (2)- Average influence: 22.1%
Moderately Loyal (3)- Average influence: 18.5%
Extremely Loyal (4)- Average influence: 14.3%

Figure V:



Not at all Loyal (1)- Average influence: 13.9%
Slightly Loyal (2)- Average influence: 18.3%
Moderately Loyal (3)- Average influence: 13.6%
Extremely Loyal (4)- Average influence: 10.0%

Figure W:



Not at all Loyal (1)- Average influence: 24.2%
Slightly Loyal (2)- Average influence: 17.8%
Moderately Loyal (3)- Average influence: 18.9%
Extremely Loyal (4)- Average influence: 20.7%

Figure X: