

The New

What makes a supermarket innovative? Where would shoppers most like to see innovation? Which supermarkets are most innovative?

Conventional wisdom has it that many — if not most — supermarkets haven’t changed much for about 50 years. True, there’s more in the way of prepared meals. And the number of products offered has grown. Store brands may have improved in quality, too.

But has the basic construct of aisles of ingredients really budged all that much? We put this question to *Reveries.com* readers and the answer came back somewhere down the middle: A majority of 55 percent said the supermarket they shop most frequently is only “somewhat” innovative.

As one respondent put it: *“It seems grocery retailers perceive innovation as being creative with inventory and don’t give enough consideration to environment and space.”*

The only area a majority deemed innovative was “product selection” (54 percent), followed by “prepared foods” (47 percent) and “private labels” (39 percent).

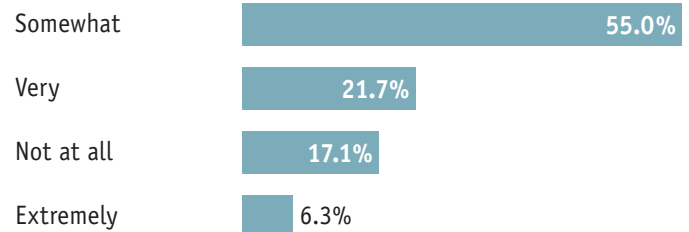
However, in nine out of ten areas, survey respondents suggested they would like to see more in the way of innovation: product selection; format/store layout; checkout; customer service; promotions; new services; online tools; and displays. The only area shoppers indicated they are satisfied is “private labels.”

Online shopping tools appear to be especially ripe for innovation, as an overwhelming majority of respondents (74 percent) said they do not use retailer websites. An even larger majority of 80 percent said they do not use “any other online planning tools for grocery shopping.”

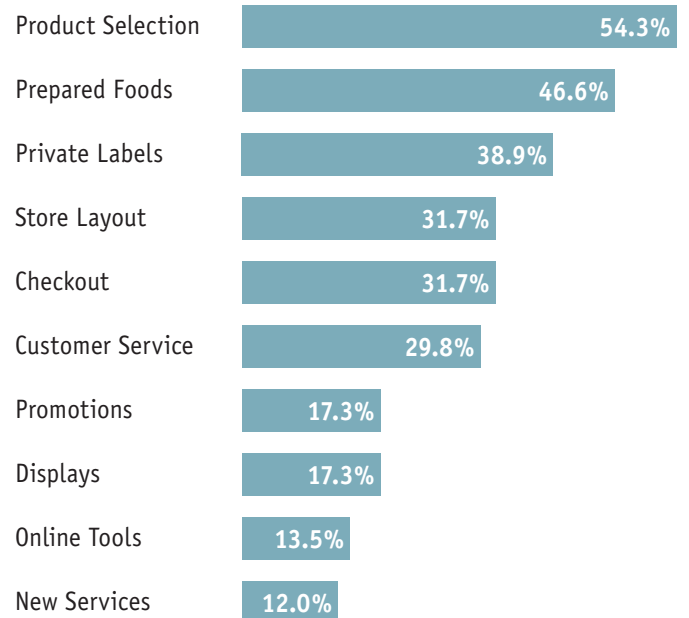
Some remarked that they weren’t aware that such tools exist, while others confirmed that this may well be the case: *“I wish I could get ads via my phone and use mobile coupons. I would also love to be able to upload coupons to my loyalty card and not have to deal with paper coupons.”*

Frustrations were many, with crowded stores and slow checkouts being the most frequently cited complaints. Others aimed their ire at stores that rearrange aisles for no apparent reason: *“Shuffling where categories are found,*

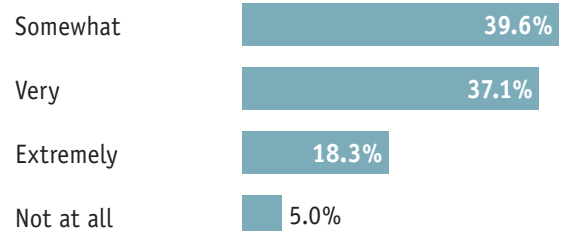
How innovative is the supermarket you shop most often?



In which ways is your supermarket innovative? (pick as many as apply)

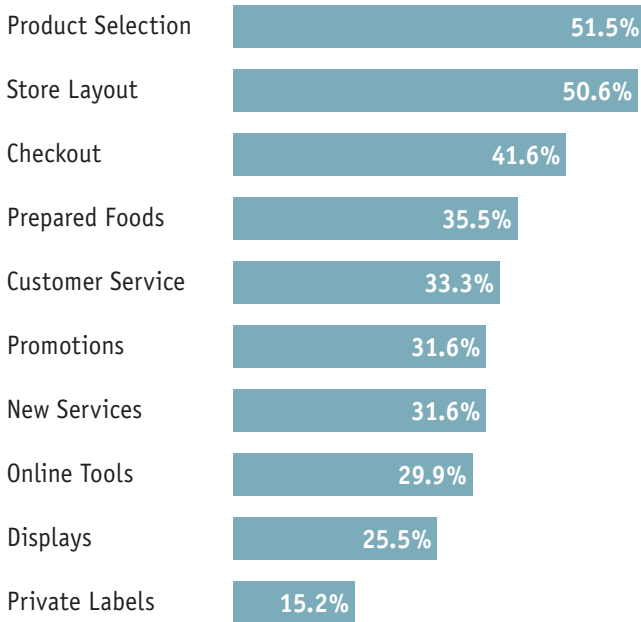


How important is a supermarket’s prices versus its innovations to you?

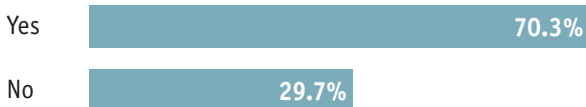


Super

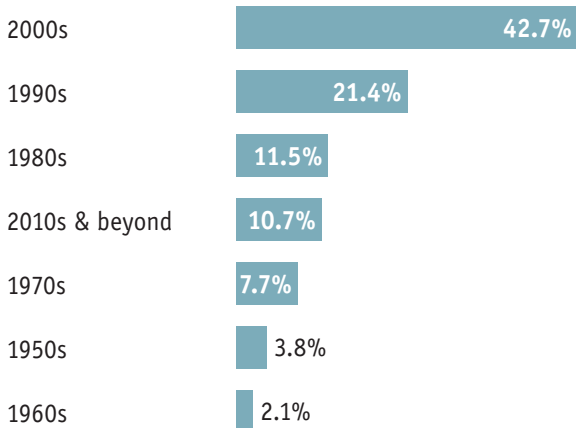
Where would you most like to see innovation at your supermarket? (pick as many as apply)



In general, do you enjoy grocery shopping?



Overall, which era does the supermarket at which you usually shop most resemble?



sometimes just from the right to the left are annoyances, not innovations.”

Self-checkouts also received mixed reviews. Some said they liked the convenience while others said they only benefit retailers. One respondent had a similar complaint about store formats: *“I’m tired of grocery stores being laid out to help the grocer and the vendors.”*

Overall, there was no shortage of suggestions on where supermarkets could improve in ways both big and small:

“Why can’t grocery bakeries make good, healthful, preservative-free breads?”

“This business of forcing me up and down aisles and across the store to find the things I need is tiresome and makes me tired and angry.”

“I wish I didn’t have to go to three different stores in order to supply our home.”

“So many carts with wheels that don’t work right!”

Despite such grievances, a perhaps surprisingly large majority of 70 percent said they generally enjoy grocery shopping, especially discovering new items. And even though most do not consider their supermarkets to be innovative, a plurality of 43 percent felt their grocers were up-to-date.

But as one respondent observed, the innovations of the future may well be rooted in the past: *“I shop at a small, family-owned supermarket that prides itself on personal service. Its innovation is old-fashioned customer service.”*

Another hinted that maybe it isn’t up to supermarkets to be innovative at all: *“Since I purchase groceries from three stores and one farmer’s market each month, maybe I’m the innovator.”*

And this comment may provide the greatest insight of all: *“Here’s the deal, when money is in short supply and entertainment dollars are small or non-existent, grocery shopping becomes entertainment... When money is flowing and we can eat out more often and I’m cooking less, then grocery shopping goes back to being a chore.”*

The supermarket picked at the number-one most innovative? Whole Foods, followed by Trader Joe’s and Wegmans. Curiously, nowhere near as many respondents selected these same stores as the supermarkets they shop most frequently. ■

Complete survey results can be found at: www.hubmagazine.com/survey/supermarkets