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Wal-Mart Supercenter Tops Among Organics Shoppers: Study

OCTOBER 11, 2007 -- NEW YORK -- Wal-Mart Supercenter, the leading grocery seller in the country, could also be a top destination on a nationwide basis for consumers of organics, according to research released yesterday by Scarborough Research, a joint venture between Arbitron, Inc. and the Nielsen Co.

Scarborough's analysis, based on research involving adults who consumed any organic food product in their household during the past month, found that 29 percent of organics users had shopped a Wal-Mart Supercenter during the past week.

However, when it comes to having special appeal to organics consumers, Whole Foods leads the pack, the research indicated. Organics consumers are 272 percent more likely than the average consumer to have shopped Whole Foods during the past week. By contrast, they are 21 percent less likely than the average to have shopped Wal-Mart Supercenter during this timeframe.

Other grocery stores that have a higher-than average concentration of organics consumers include Trader Joe's (organics consumers are 180 percent more likely than the average consumer to have shopped Trader Joe's during the past week); Safeway (72 percent more likely); Costco (70 percent more likely); and SuperTarget (50 percent more likely).

"An organics user's local grocery store availability will dictate where they shop," said Alisa Joseph, v.p., advertiser agency services for Scarborough Research, in a statement. "Whole Foods and Trader Joe's have established themselves in the organics market, and as such are more popular among organics users. However, a high percentage of organics users shop prominent U.S. stores such as Wal-Mart due to its significant local market penetration."

The research also revealed geographical patterns among organics consumers. In the total U.S., 17 percent of all adults appear to be eating organics. However, the West Coast is a stronghold for these consumers, with 35 percent of San Francisco adults having consumed organic foods during the past month (making it the top U.S. city for organics consumers). Other cities with a high index for organics consumers include Seattle (32 percent of adults ate organic foods during the past month), Portland, Ore. (27 percent), Washington D.C. and Denver (26 percent each) and San Diego (24 percent).

Nationally, organics consumers spend an average of \$127 on their weekly household grocery visit -- that's 10 percent higher than the national norm of \$115, according to Scarborough. Their annual household income is \$86,000 per year.

Additionally, these consumers tend to be younger and have families -- they are 19 percent more likely than the national average to be ages 18-34, and 13 percent more likely to have two or more children at home.

Another interesting finding from Scarborough: Wine and imported beer are popular beverages among organics consumers. One in four organics users aged 21 and older bought wine at a grocery store during the past month, and they are more likely to have bought all types of wines, from sparkling and white wines to reds and roses. Almost one-third of these shoppers drank an imported beer during the past month, vs. 20 percent of the total 21-plus population.

The Nielsen Co. is Progressive Grocer's parent company.