



Wide aisles invite a walk between the shelves exposing shoppers to an increased number of products (Photographed by Lona Askins)

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Grocery shopping

Sales techniques vs. budget

By MARY CONNELLY

What was once merely a chore—grocery shopping—may still be a chore. But to the supermarket business, it's become a study in consumer psychology and a test of wits with the shopper.

Red lighting over the meat counter heightens red meat color in some stores. Whipped cream is shelved near the strawberries in others. Cereal boxes with toys inside greet preschoolers at eye level.

Sales techniques can whittle down the family food dollar unless shoppers are conscious of quicksand areas of spending. While supermarket shelving and lay-out may be convenient in some instances, they may also cause you to spend extra food dollars.

Sample it—needed at home may be placed on lower shelves. New products assume eye-level positions to catch attention.

Frequently purchased items—such as bread, meat and paper goods—may be shelved so shoppers are exposed to a maximum number of store areas.

"GROCERY STORES are set out in a special way. Everytime you walk into this maze, you start to play a game," said Linda Robbins, home economist for Weight Watchers of Eastern and Central Michigan. Weight Watchers has begun a series of public lectures on consumerism.

Marketing principles suggest that increased exposure to a product increases the likelihood that the shopper will make a purchase. Consequently, Ms. Robbins advised that shopping be planned so that a minimum number of aisles are traversed on each shopping trip.

She said that supermarkets are currently increasing floor space to provide wider aisles for the shopper. While easing shopping congestion, it may also effect increased purchases: avoiding a trafficked aisle, shoppers may walk down an uncongested path and make a purchase.

According to Ms. Robbins, varying lighting systems of white, blue, yellow and red may be used in stores to most favorably reflect package coloring and command attention.

"Look up," she said. "You may see varying lighting over the aisle."

She explained that some packaging colors lose their impact and consumer appeal if placed under incorrect lighting.

"BUGLES, WHISTLES and Daisies" (snack foods) began a new era of packaging," she said. "The dye of those packages looks good under any lighting system. Most products don't transfer."

According to Ms. Robbins, there are particular supermarket areas where the shopper's vulnerability increases.

• Corner displays where a product is prominently exposed.

• Ends of aisles where a product carried in another area of the store is also displayed in this more advantageous position.

• Check-out aisles where film, magazines and razor blades attract atten-

tion and gum and mints stop children's fidgeting.

• Aisles encountered shortly after entering a store and before the grocery basket is loaded induces extra spending.

Publications released by the Michigan State University Cooperative Extension Service also offer some tips on the shoppers' Achilles' heel.

• Multiple pricing signs, stamped "3 for..." trigger "bargain" in many shopper's minds. Calculate savings before buying.

• Try to shop alone. Studies show that shopping with a friend increases spending. Greatest rise in the bill will be felt if children and/or husband accompany a woman shopper.

• Eat before shopping to avoid purchases motivated by stomach hunger rumblings.

• Use a shopping list to reduce impulse buying.

How far does food dollar go?

Counting how far your food dollar goes means compiling an accurate tally sheet.

According to the Michigan State University Cooperative Extension Service, the food dollar does not include money spent at the food store for household supplies, health and beauty aids, housewares, clothing or magazines. It usually discounts spending for soft drinks, chewing gum, tobacco, alcoholic beverages or pet food.

When tabulating the elasticity of the food dollar, count the money spent on actual food for the family and the money spent on food eaten away from home.

National averages suggest that approximately one-fourth of the food dollar is spent for meals purchased away from home. Don't forget to add the coins dropped into vending machines.

ABOUT 77 PERCENT of total food store spending is for food items. The remaining percentage represents such as cake pans, party hose, magazines and other non-food items purchased.

According to a spokesman for a major Detroit supermarket chain, there is a definite trend among supermarkets to carry an increasing number of non-food items.

"If you consume food items, you can only consume the capacity of your stomach," the spokesman commented. "It is not true of items not consumed through the stomach. Nobody says you can't buy 72 sport shirts. It opens new market vistas for supermarkets."

Although supermarkets obtain their greatest total dollar revenue from food items, non-food items carry a greater percentage of profit than food items.

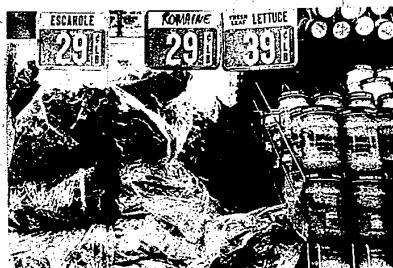
The store spokesman asserted that additional revenue from non-food sales would permit reduced food costs.



Displays of non-food items garner attention and account for 23 percent of the food store dollar spent



Cereal boxes with toy offers meet children at eye-level



Thousand Island salad dressing shelved with the lettuce suggest a purchase