

Research finds how supermarkets can control our speed of walking

Submitted by: BlueSky Education

Thursday, 23 March 2017

Supermarkets can control our walking speed when shopping, new research has found, by changing the pattern or markings on the floor.

A study by Rotterdam School of Management, Erasmus University (RSM), demonstrates that retail managers can persuade customers to walk at the ideal pace, either quicker or slower, on their shopping trip, by altering lines and patterns.

Bram Van den Bergh, who led the research, said: "Managing the flow of customers can be a challenge for retailers. When customers rush through the store, they miss interesting products and buy less. Spending too much time in front of the shelves can lead to annoying congestion in the aisles, which also leads to declining sales.

"It has been known for some time that walking speed plays an important role in shoppers' purchasing decisions. But until now it was unclear what retail managers could do to influence the pace of their customers. This research was set up to find out how they might achieve this."

The research reveals that closely spaced, horizontal lines on the floor slow the pace at which shoppers walk down an aisle, encouraging them to browse. Widen the gaps between the lines and shoppers move more quickly.

Marks on the floor alter the perception of the length of the aisle with more frequent lines making shoppers believe that the end is farther away so they instinctively slow down. If the lines are further apart, shoppers speed up because they think the end is nearer.

The researchers observed 4,000 people in a series of experiments that were conducted both in-store and in a lab. If the lines were 20 inches apart, they found it created the optical illusion that the end of the aisle was further away. Shoppers then tended to slow their pace.

In subsequent tests, slower shoppers were found to be much better at recalling what products they had seen than those who sped through.

The researchers related their findings to goal gradient theory: when an individual is closer to their goal, in this case, the end of the aisle, they will walk faster to reach it.

ENDS

For more information, please contact Chris Johnson at BlueSky PR – chris@bluesky-pr.com or call +44(0) 1582 790 091 or 07867580492