

## BEWARE FALLING INTO TRAPS LAID BY SUPERMARKETS

Every time you come out of a departmental store or a supermarket, you must have noticed that you (a) never return empty-handed, (b) purchased something that was not required for immediate use, and (c) you end up buying more than you require and forgetting to purchase what you had in mind when you entered the departmental stores. This is because you are a victim of the ultra-modern selling techniques which department stores adopt.

The supermarket and departmental stores which were once limited to cities have spread their network to small towns and even to some villages. The availability of all items under one roof, attractive packaging, fine quality products and visual attractions in the supermarket have made consumers bid goodbye to the tradition of going to other shops.

Today's consumer is ready to pay more rather than waste his time bargaining and making a comparative study. Impatience, a result of stress-filled modern life has made the consumer a victim of supermarket and departmental stores. Supermarkets have their own merits: it certainly cuts into the pockets of the consumers; if consumers insulate themselves against the sales gimmicks of these elite outlets.

Supermarkets and departmental stores work with twin objectives. Firstly, to ensure that consumers get into the shop and secondly, to ensure they don't leave without buying something. Over the years they have perfected the art of attracting consumers through various means. And these techniques are adopted in such a way that it never appears to be illegal or unfair. Yet the consumer is the loser.

The very layout of the super market is designed in such a way that it not only attracts consumers but also make them go around in search of their requirements. For example, essential items like groceries are kept at the back, almost invisible to the consumers.

In some supermarkets you may find the pathway blocked by packets, bottles, jars, cans, etc. If you feel that the seller is not efficient in stacking, you are mistaken. These items are scattered purposely so that you may have a look at it and are induced to buy. In the process of helping the shopkeeper to arrange the packets you may fall victim and buy things not needed.

Secondly, the way in which goods are arranged may also make you vulnerable to the selling practices like complementation. For example, tempting foods like salted cashew nuts may be kept near salt or dhal. With surplus money in your purse, salted cashew nuts are too tempting to be ignored.

Though supermarkets sell all types of goods, they aggressively promote a few products in which they have some interest. Has it not come to your notice that in some supermarkets one particular brand of product is found in every corner of the market? By placing a particular product in more than one place, supermarkets have

succeeded in breaking down consumer resistance. You may ignore that particular product in one or two places but not if it is found everywhere.

Supermarkets and departmental stores offer one bargain or the other throughout the year. In such cases, the bargains are not kept at one place but many. The idea is to trap the consumers who easily fall victim by repeatedly seeing the product being given away for a bargain.

Supermarkets ensure that the consumer spends his money on unessential items first and then turn towards necessities. To achieve this objective daily necessities and economy-size packets are stacked in the first or second floors of the building. Cosmetics, fast-food etc are kept just near the entrance of the market.

Despite all these sales gimmicks, supermarkets sell some products at a loss. In busies psychology these products are called 'loss leaders'. The aim is to attract crowds. Once they are in, they are made to purchase something or the other along with loss leaders. Supermarkets have different loss leaders at different points of time.

It is not that you should always be a victim of this nicely laid-out trap. As an informed consumer you can insulate yourself from these shocks.

Before you go on a splurge....

Before you go out shopping make a list in order of preference like essentials, non essentials etc.

Do not go shopping on an empty stomach or when you are under stress. Studies show that stress and hunger affect your 'purchase psychology'.

It is better to shop on cash basis. You run the risk of purchasing more if you carry cheque books or credit cards.

Go empty-handed once and study the layout of the supermarket or departmental stores.

Avoid impulsive buying and set a time to end your shopping.

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