

# The effect of eye-catching object on sampling at supermarket

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This paper considers how consumers pay attention to and participate in sales promotions. To achieve this purpose, we conducted experiments on sampling jam at a supermarket. We did comparison experiments with four conditions using an eye-catching object to encourage shoppers to notice the samples and a voting-style gimmick to encourage them to try the samples. Experimental results show that the object and the gimmick were useful for encouraging shoppers to participate in the sampling. This tendency was noted among people of certain age groups, in pairs, and coming from the entrance.

## 1. Introduction

This research considers the method and possibility of promoting consumers' attention in sales promotion. Specifically, we measured consumers' reactions to jam sampling. We conducted the sampling using low-relevance goods that can be substituted and that consumers do not purchase on a daily basis. Even if they would not normally purchase the product, it is added to the consideration set of consumers, and the possibility that they would purchase the jam in the near future would rise. We also used an eye-catching object to catch consumers' attention. Ordinary sampling is not enough to attract the attention of consumers; however, an eye-catching object gives consumers a positive sense of incompatibility in their sight and can raise interest in products. Therefore, the possibility that the product will remain in the long-term memory of consumers will rise.

## 2. Literature Review

According to Chandon et al. [Chandon 00], the benefits of sales promotions are explained as a perceived value attached to the promotion experience. This means that customers respond to a promotional offer because of the positive experience and value. They suggest that promotions can help consumers to find the product they want or remind them of the product and quantity they need to buy. This can reduce search and decision costs and improve shopping efficiency and convenience.

There are various empirical studies on sales promotions and purchasing environments in grocery stores. Iyengar and Lepper [Iyengar 00] conducted a jam sampling experiment at a supermarket in the US. Two pattern displays, a table with samples of six kinds of jam, and a table with samples of 24 types of jam were presented to shoppers. The percentage of shoppers who stopped was 20% higher at the extensive-selection display of jams, but the percentage of shoppers who actually purchased items at the limited-selection display of jams was ten times higher. Zhang [Zhang 17] conducted a bread sampling experiment at a bakery in Japan

and introduced a voting-style sampling of two kinds of bread. It was demonstrated that this reduced consumer-perceived risk and improved the efficiency of tasting sales.

## 3. Our Approach

In this experiment, we added two elements to encourage the participation of shoppers in the conventional sales promotion of food sampling. The first was an eye-catching object. Such an object attracts shoppers, and they notice the table of samples. The biggest problem in conducting sales promotion is that consumers are unaware of the existence of the promotion in the first place. Expanding an attractive promotion is meaningless if consumers are unaware of it. The object solves that problem.

We prepared a conspicuous fake food (Figures 1) that looks like jam falling onto a piece of toast in the air. Shoppers walking near the fake food would be highly likely to see it because it was fixed at about eye level. We designed it so as to increase visibility. Specifically, we made it larger than actual toast and jam bottles, and the colors were closer to a complementary color relationship to make it more conspicuous. There are two reasons for adding a fake food (toast) to encourage jam sampling. First, we thought that one scene where people eat jam is breakfast time. We aimed to let shoppers who were not interested in jam before coming to the supermarket develop interest. The second reason is because the bread was necessary for the voting style (described later), so we thought this was an appropriate combination.

The second element encouraging the participation of shoppers in the food sampling was a voting-style gimmick (Figure 2). The gimmick gives them the motivation to actively participate in order to enhance the effectiveness of the promotion. According to Zhang, food sampling as a sales promotion has perceived risk for consumers. Once they sample a food, they feel obligated to buy the goods, so they may decline the samples. In order to alleviate this risk, the voting-style gimmick was invented. In our experiment, we treated jam as the main product, but we decided to accompany the jam with bread to carry out the voting-style gimmick using toothpicks.

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Figure 1: The eye-catching object.



Figure 2: The voting-style gimmick.

## 4. Hypothesis

We formed two hypotheses on shoppers' reactions to samples at a supermarket.

**Hypothesis I:** As the eye-catching object attracts shoppers, the possibility that they will notice the sales promotion increases.

**Hypothesis II:** As the voting-style gimmick lowers the perceived risk of shoppers, they will actively participate in the promotion.

## 5. Method

Over four days (Wednesday, September 26th to Saturday the 29th, 2018), we conducted a jam sampling experiment at a super market in Fukuoka, Japan. We set up only experimental materials without any salespeople, and we left all actions to the freedom of the shoppers. The staff made observations so as to be inconspicuous from afar. Observation items were “they looked at the sampling,” “they stopped,” “they ate the sampling food,” and so on. We observed for 5 hours each at various times of day and under 4 conditions. Condition 1 was in the basic form of all experiments. Pincushions for voting were not essential, but one was installed in order to align the experimental conditions. In Condition 2 we added the voting style to Condition 1. People who tasted were urged to vote by placing their used toothpicks into one of the pincushions beside the jam that they preferred. In Condition 3 we added the eye-catching

object to Condition 1. We placed only one pincushion for the same reason as in Condition 1. Condition 4 synthesized Conditions 1 through 3.

We observed 2,147 people, and 2,073 people were useful samples, measured as passersby who were nearby and reacted to the sampling. There were 1,653 women and 420 men. Participants were not informed that they were being observed, so their characteristics were based on the observer's estimation.

## 6. Results

In order to verify the hypothesis, a logistic regression analysis revealed the effect of eye-catching objects and environmental factors on shoppers' behavior. *Attention*, *stopping*, *sampling*, and *voting* were the dependent variables. *Attention* included three other dependent variables and also included weak reactions, such as glances. We made all of these as dummy variables.

When the dependent variables were *attention*, *stopping*, and *sampling*, the output indicated that *object*, the independent variable, was significantly related with positive coefficients. There was no significant result for voting as a dependent variable. When the dependent variables were *stopping* and *sampling*, the output indicated that *vote*, the independent variable, was significantly related with positive coefficients. There were no significant results for *attention* or *voting*. These results partially supported Hypothesis I and II. Thus, it turns out that the eye-catching object had a positive effect on consumers' behavior.

## 7. Conclusion

We conducted this experiment with emphasis on promotion within stores because the importance of sales promotion is increasing due to the commoditization of consumer goods. We hypothesized that it is possible to increase the effects of promotions by adding an eye-catching object and a voting-style gimmick to food sampling as a conventional sales promotion. As a result, it was revealed that the object and gimmick were able to enhance the possibility of shoppers reacting to the sampling. A relatively wide age group of shoppers reacted to the sampling.

## References

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