



Numerical signs have consumers buying more

Background

Numerical signs, such as “2 for \$2” or “12 per person” make you spend twice as much as you would have without the sign.

Recent studies spanning 89 grocery stores and thousands of consumers conducted by researchers at the Food and Brand Lab at the University of Illinois found that certain promotions have great effect on the number of items you purchased at the grocery store.

The research found that promotions that utilized multi-unit pricing (3 for \$3), purchase limits (Limit 12/Person) and suggestive selling (Buy 10 For Your Freezer) all increased how many of a product consumers purchased – such promotions can be found in grocery stores across the country.

Most people buy one or two of a product at a time. They decide on a low number and buy more if the product’s on sale. When promotions suggest high numbers (“Buy 12 so you don’t run out!”), people buy more – whether it’s a good deal or not.

Key Teaching Point

- ❑ Beware that you will tend to buy more everytime you buy from a numerical sign. People are enticed into buying more through sales that suggest a number to purchase.
- ❑ Signs with numbers do not mean sales. They might just be promoting the product, “Grab six for studying.”

Student Demonstration

Before class make a list of some commonly purchased grocery items or use the one provided [here](#).

Hand these out to the students at the beginning of class. Tell them to write down the amount they would normally purchase of each item on a trip to the grocery store. Give them 5 to 7 minutes to complete this task. Now, tell the students that the following has changed when they get to the grocery store:

- ⇒ There is a sign for bread, “2 for \$1.”
- ⇒ In front of the 12-packs of soda, a sign says, “Limit 4 per person.”
- ⇒ There is a sign by the pizzas that says, “Buy 10 for your freezer.”

Now, ask the students to use the new information and write down what they think they would actually buy at the store.

Ask them if any of their answers changed – why or why not?

If your class is like most people, the signs will have changed their buying habits – they might have even thought they were getting a deal when they really weren’t.

Wansink, Brian, Robert J. Kent and Stephen J. Hoch (1998), “An Anchoring and Adjustment Model of Purchase Quantity Decisions.” *Journal of Marketing Research*, 35:1 (February), 71-81.