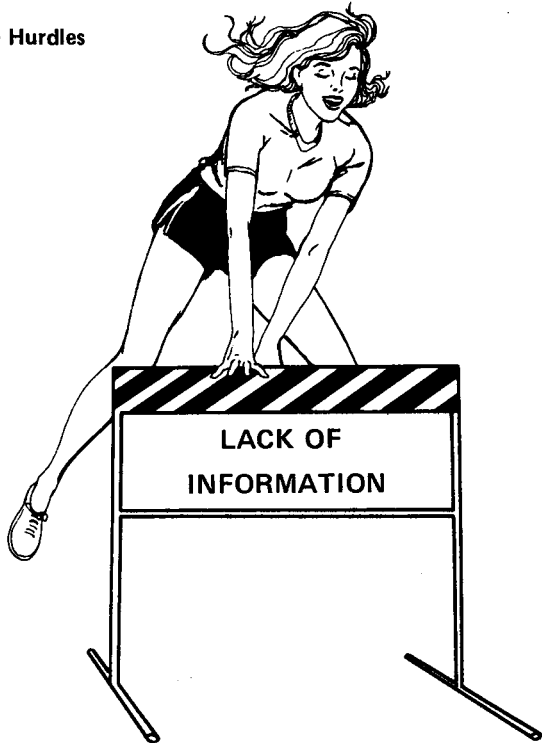


CONSUMER INFORMATION

3 HOME ECONOMICS—FAMILY LIVING NO. 25—1971
 MARY FRANCES LAMISON

The market place can be a frightening maze to the unaware or uninitiated. The right to choose is an individual's privilege in a democracy. It is the consumer's responsibility to choose from among the goods and services offered by some of the 200 million citizens in the United States. With so much competition for business (plus competition from markets outside the U.S.), the problem is knowing how to choose one product over another. There are three hurdles to jump in this choice: **LACK OF INFORMATION, INDIVIDUAL BUYING HABITS, AND learning to KNOW THE MARKET** as it relates to personal and family needs and goals.

The Hurdles



1. Which product will meet your needs? A swim suit being purchased for pool wear may need to be colorfast to chlorine, while the swim suit worn in a lake might need to be colorfast only to sun and water. Some colors are more affected than others by perspiration. Gold in some fabrics can turn green, for example.
2. Pre-shrunk means won't shrink more than 1-2-3 percent. A sanforized label assures shrinkage of 1 percent or less.
3. But there are no performance standards for such terms as "water-repellent," "wrinkle resistant," "no-iron," or "permanent press." Many items of clothing (particularly imported items) have no standardized sizes. To encourage standardized sizes and performance standards, the consumer should

Examine Your Buying Habits

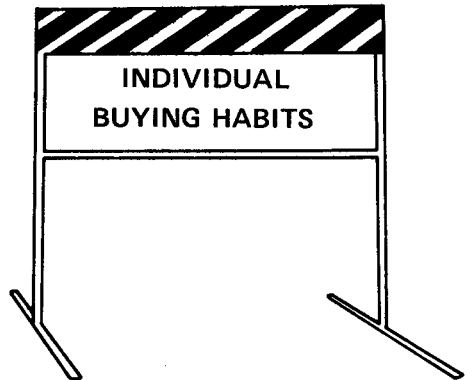
write manufacturers urging them to get together so that the same term will have the same meaning wherever it is found.

4. So much is written today for and about consumer issues that diligent effort is needed to sift fact from fancy in what manufacturerers claim a product can do. Detergents is a subject so rife with claims and counter claims it is difficult to decipher the terminology. Perhaps the most useful endeavor for the consumer is to develop the ability to read/listen and determine whether or not the idea presented is a:

PROBLEM
THEORY
SOLUTION
EMPTY WORDS

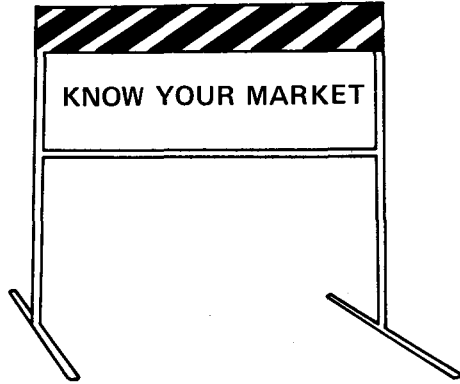
What is the problem, theory, or solution proposed? What action is recommended? What is the merit of its use in any locale? Why? What adaptations would be needed to use it where you live?

Do I Buy By Plan?



1. Motivation researchers say that grocery store shopping with a list (plan) can save the consumer up to 75 percent of what might be spent if shopping were haphazard. How could a similar plan save on clothing purchases—if clothing needs for an entire season, all occasions, replacement, and remodeling were thought through in advance? What would be saved by planning coordination of undergarments, outer garments, accessories, and knowing which dresses, coats, shoes, accessories could be worn together?
2. How well do you remember when shopping that a bargain is a bargain only if it is a **needed** item of **high** quality obtained at a **low** price?
3. It is by developing the ability to recognize quality that the consumer can get money's worth in either discount houses, mail order stores, chain or branch stores, department

or specialty shops. Top quality of goods isn't needed for every purpose. The consumer needs to be able to recognize degrees of quality to match the product to the purpose.



1. Stores base their prices on the services they offer. Volume buying practices mean the store can offer the consumer lower prices.

Volume business means greater turnover and more specials—featuring lower than regular prices. Some chain stores, branch stores, and mail order houses feature their own brands at less than name brand cost.

Many stores profit more from charge than cash sales. Special store services and overhead add to the purchase price: some examples are elegant decor and fixtures, personalized sales help rather than a few clerks and an emphasis on self service, charges, lay-aways, installment paying, mail orders, delivery telephone ordering, and baby tending services while shopping.

The terms, "irregulars," "seconds," or "surplus," marked on goods can mean reduced prices.

Pre-packaged goods and self service can mean reduced costs.

2. Manufacturers are usually responsive to consumer requests, but consumers should make use of the resources they request, such as truth-in-lending laws that require the merchant to tell both the credit and cash cost in dollars for the item being purchased.

Read labels and ask clerks for further definitions when you don't understand; new labeling is very detailed. Ask that all brands standardize their clothing sizes.

3. Accept the fact that all products have their limitations. For example, don't expect cold water detergent to clean heavy soil in cold water. And—durable finish is nice when it comes to no-iron features, but may make it impossible to shorten or lengthen a garment.



4. Remember products have basic ingredients that cause them to function. Household cleaning products have alkalis to remove grease and dirt and acids to brighten and shine. Various uses are aided by the proportion of the ingredients. A manufacturer can package color, flavor, add fragrance, highlight one ingredient, and advertise to make his product seem more worthy than his competitors'. The consumer is lost in the maze unless needs are determined and it is known how these needs fit personal and family goals. for the pressure is great on the consumer to choose each product.