

Transcript

Thank you for downloading Pretend You've Got No Money - an unauthorised, undercover audio tour of your local supermarket.

To fully experience Pretend You've Got No Money please listen to it in your local supermarket, as a special trip or part of your household shop. You can listen to it on your mobile phone, just make sure you have a pair of headphones with you.

The tour lasts approximately half an hour. You will be asked to move around the supermarket following a specific route. At the end of each chapter you will hear [checkout beep]. This signals for you to pause the audio to give yourself time to reach your next destination. When you are ready simply press play to go to the next chapter.

When you have reached the supermarket please take a basket or a trolley at the entrance and pretend you are an ordinary customer.

Press play when ready.

[checkout beep]

Where do you usually start your shopping when you go to a supermarket? Is it dairy or maybe the coffee section? Do you skip the veg aisle? Maybe you never get to the sweets? How about frozen goods and fizzy drinks?

Start walking around and consider the layout of the shop - is it grid-like or perhaps more circular? Are the aisles long? How easy is it to skip certain sections?

It's common knowledge that supermarket layout and ambience has a huge effect on consumer behaviour, but did you know that 60-70% of purchases in supermarkets are made on impulse as a result of exposure to in-store stimuli? Now look around and notice the colours, the lighting, the music, the shelf design, the arrangement of products - these are some of the elements of the heavily designed infrastructure that is there to sell you more stuff. The marketing studies are constantly updated too. Recent research methodologies include: immersive, photorealistic virtual reality supermarket environments, engaging study participants in various shopping tasks, measuring cortical brain activity in consumers while navigating a shop, and AI analysis of footage tracing the eye movements and facial expressions of shoppers.

Do you shop spontaneously or do you always have a predetermined list? Do you tend to do a weekly shop or do you shop daily? Somewhere in between? Or do you mostly do your grocery shopping online? Are you a browsing shopper who compares brands and prices? Or do you wait to the last minute and then run around frantically, trying to get the shopping done before the shop closes? Or, are you a special offer addict perhaps, who having picked up a few bargains, starts thinking everything is a deal and then overspends anyway? How do you choose what you buy?

Pick a few items close to you and check the label to see who produced them.

[checkout beep]

Almost all the food people buy in supermarkets around the world is produced by just 11 companies: Nestlé, Coca-Cola, Kellogg's, Mondelēz (formerly Kraft Foods), PepsiCo, General Mills, Danone, P&G, Johnson & Johnson, Unilever and Mars.

The illusion of choice keeps you busy contemplating and comparing the options presented to you, without considering ones that are not given, including not buying anything at all. There is also a thing called "the paradox of choice", where the more options you have, the less likely you are to make a decision at all - and definitely not a well informed one. A few years ago Tesco decided to scrap 30,000 of the 90,000 products from its shelves; it used to sell 28 different tomato ketchups and 224 kinds of air freshener.

Now go to the fruit and veg section and touch some of the fruits and vegetables as if you were checking their ripeness.

[checkout beep]

Notice the texture, firmness, temperature, weight and smell of the product.

Consumer behaviour research has concluded that if a shopper touches or picks up the merchandise they are more likely to buy it, that's why certain items are in easy reach. Touch not only confirms visual cues to do with the product quality or freshness, but also elicits an emotional response in the consumer because of feelings of intimacy associated with the sense of touch. Touching and even imagery encouraging touch increase perceived ownership of that object.

Are there any bananas in the fruit section? Any Chiquita bananas to be precise?

[checkout beep]

During the 90s and early 2000s the multinational banana company Chiquita Brands International transferred around 1.7 million USD to the violent right-wing paramilitary group United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia. The company claimed it made the payments only to protect their employees, but in 2007 pleaded guilty and agreed to pay the US justice department a fine of 25 million USD - about half of the profits of the Colombian banana-growing operation from that time. The company also fuelled the armed conflict by paying off leftist guerrilla groups such as FARC to protect its interests in banana-growing regions. Between 1997 and 2004, almost 4000 people were murdered in the region of Uraba. In less than fifteen years 668 unionists were killed from the main banana-workers union alone and an additional 60,000 forced into what is now the second-largest internally displaced population in the world.

In 1928 Chiquita - then the United Fruit Company - got the police and army to massacre hundreds of banana workers striking for better conditions. This is known in Colombia as The Banana Massacre.

99% of exported bananas are of Cavendish variety and such agricultural monocultures are a perfect feeding ground for pathogens. A strain of deadly fungus called Tropical Race 4 is

currently decimating banana plantations around the world. Another strain of the fungus almost entirely wiped out Gros Michel - the previously most commonly exported banana variety.

The most serious existential threat to the world's crops, however, is climate change. Changing rainfall patterns and intensified heat resulting in floods and droughts affect global yields of staples such as grains, corn and rice - the three crops that more than half of the global population relies on - causing shrinking food supplies. The current dominant industrial model of agriculture relies on pesticides and fertilisers that reduce biodiversity and overexploit soils. It's not climate-resilient and contributes to global warming and loss of natural habitat. With crops occupying about 11% of the world's land surface, and grazing fields an additional 30%, we live in a world where 40% of all plants face extinction, including arabica coffee, cocoa, peanuts and wine grapes.

Farming, along with all human activities, has to undergo a process of deep adaptation - i.e. changes in practices to prepare for and live with the climate-influenced breakdown of societies.

Now check where the other fruits and vegetables in the shop come from. Which of them have travelled the least and which have the most air-miles?

[checkout beep]

If you are in Western Europe, chances are a large proportion of the fruit and vegetables in your local supermarket were grown in Almeria in Spain. The sea of plastic greenhouses in the region expands over 185 square miles and is one of the few man-made structures visible from space. It is where about 3.5 million tons of fruit and vegetables are produced annually. 30% of the workers tending to the Almeria greenhouses are undocumented migrants, who work in conditions resembling modern slavery. Most are paid less than a minimum wage and live in neighbouring slums built out of recycled plastic and wood from old greenhouse structures. Migrant agricultural workers worldwide usually work in vulnerable conditions and are susceptible to exploitation. They often stay in isolated accommodation on farms and face language and cultural barriers that mean they are separated from the rest of society, making the exploitation easier to hide.

Have you ever grown any food crops yourself or worked on a farm? Try to find the product you have experience of growing or harvesting and check its price.

[checkout beep]

Karl Marx based his materialist conception of history on the notion of humans as corporeal beings, who needed to produce their means of subsistence, beginning with food, water, shelter, clothing, and extending to all of the other aspects of life. All labour - wrote Marx in *Capital* - is first directed towards the appropriation and production of food. Marx says: "The product of labour is labour which has been embodied in an object, which has become material: it is the objectification of labour. Labour's realisation is its objectification."

Objectification is more obvious in handmade pieces but we rarely think of cucumbers, for instance, as a product of someone's labour. My friend once told me how cucumbers are harvested - she used to do it as a summer job. There is this machine with a platform where workers lie on their stomachs all day picking cucumbers as the harvester moves. I can't buy a cucumber anymore without having that image in my head.

This partly automated process or the use of more advanced automation such as harvester robots is relatively advanced only in countries where labour is expensive, there are limits to working hours and redundancies, there is a shortage of local workers and limited access to cheap migrant labourers. Factory-based food processing is still one of the largest employment sectors globally.

Do you know how the fruit and veg you are looking at have been harvested and by whom? Were they hand picked or harvested by a machine?

Now try to find somebody working at the shop and ask them where the organic section is.

[checkout beep]

How does asking that question make you feel? Is there even such a section in your supermarket? Is it big or rather small? Or perhaps you are actually in an all-organic supermarket?

In his book *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* the French philosopher Pierre Bourdieu writes: "tastes in food also depend on the idea each class has of the body and of the effects of food on the body, that is, on its strength, health, and beauty... It follows that the body is the most indisputable materialisation of class taste".

Bourdieu argued that taste is socially constructed and transmitted. He depicted how high socioeconomic groups distinguish themselves from lower ones through their 'taste' for various lifestyle choices, such as musical, artistic and culinary tastes. According to Bourdieu, although taste is also linked to economic capital, it mainly relates to cultural capital, as it remains stable even when people's income increases, thereby reflecting certain cultural norms and values. For example: teachers generally possess significant cultural capital, but usually earn low economic capital. They tend to prefer more "refined" foods: grilled rather than stewed, fine rather than coarse, fresh produce and dairy; they are also more likely to enjoy exotic cuisine. On the other hand manual and industrial labourers who often make more money than teachers, tend to have what Bourdieu calls "popular" preferences for salty, fatty, rich foods that are filling and satisfying.

Are you allergic to any food product? Or is there anything you particularly hate eating or find disgusting? Now try to find that product in the shop.

[checkout beep]

Several studies of brain activity using Magnetic Resonance Imaging, including ones at Virginia Polytechnic & University College London, concluded that watching the brain's reaction to a single disgusting image such as contaminated food or cockroaches was sufficient

to guess each subject's political orientation. The volunteers in the studies were asked to rate how disgusting, threatening, or pleasant they thought each image was, and then answer a standard questionnaire about political ideology. Though the volunteers didn't report feeling any more or less disgusted by the images, brain scans told a different story. The more strongly a person's brain reacted to seeing disgusting images, the more likely they were to hold conservative views. The researchers theorise that conservatives, compared to liberals, have greater "negativity bias" - that is a psychological sensitivity to unpleasant or disturbing things. The research supports the findings of an eye-tracking study, which found that conservatives reacted more intensely to disgusting images.

Now please try to find something you really like. What do you like about it? Is it healthy? Is it savoury? Is it sweet? Is it something you associate with a certain time, like your childhood, the summer or the weekend?

[checkout beep]

Confirmation bias is the tendency to embrace information that supports one's beliefs and reject information that contradicts them. One of the most famous experiments about it was conducted at Stanford on a group of students who had opposing opinions about capital punishment. The students were asked to respond to two studies that presented equally compelling and entirely fake statistics for and against capital punishment. At the end of the experiment, the students who had started out pro-capital punishment were now even more in favour of it and those who had opposed it were even more hostile to the idea. There is also research suggesting that people experience genuine pleasure - a rush of dopamine - when processing information that supports their beliefs. And apparently it happens regardless of whether those beliefs are true or totally wrong.

Now, if there was one item you were asked to steal from this shop - what would it be? Have a look around. Have you ever engaged in shoplifting? Would you consider stealing something for a greater good?

[checkout beep]

According to the French philosopher Deleuze and his collaborator, psychiatrist and political activist Guattari, an object of desire is not wanted on its own, but in a specific context. This desire then produces rules that create new norms of behaviour or habits - a process that is largely subconscious. As humans we don't just have habits but the habit of forming habits. What are the rules of behaviour used when dealing with others? What happens when your rules and other people's rules are incompatible? For instance they stand on the wrong side of the escalator? Leave a shopping trolley unattended in an aisle? Or eat grapes straight from the supermarket shelf? We all know all too well the frustration when others don't follow our rules that have been crystallised into habits. But we tend to forget these are our rules, not theirs. Are such microfascist attitudes directly translatable into politics at large?

Now find the pasta section.

[checkout beep]

Check on the packaging where most of the pasta comes from.

In the 1930s Italy heavily relied on grain imports in order to satisfy the country's love for pasta. The vast majority of pasta was made of semolina flour from hard durum wheat, which did not grow well outside of southern Italy. Benito Mussolini was desperate to stop relying on other countries for wheat and to make Italy self-sufficient. He never actually banned pasta, but raised the import taxes for grains and insisted that Italians start eating more rice and vegetables grown domestically. He even had the support of the Futurists. In his "Manifesto for Futurist Cuisine" Marinetti called for a total ban on pasta. He claimed that eating pasta lessened virility, caused pessimism and dullness, and decreased ambition. Mussolini's actions jeopardised wheat imports, caused only moderate improvement of national production and resulted in a protest-telegram from the American National Macaroni Manufacturers Association. Pasta became a luxury good. But Italians still continued with their obsession.

Now head to the cake section. Is there even one in your local supermarket? Try searching for the sweets, biscuits and chocolate section. Are there any cakes there?

[checkout beep]

"Let them eat cake" is a quote attributed to Marie Antoinette, most likely falsely. It is claimed she uttered it during one of the famines that occurred in France during the reign of Louis XVI. When alerted to the suffering of the people due to the widespread bread shortages, the Queen is said to have replied, "Then let them eat brioche".

Now let's go to the bread section of the shop.

[checkout beep]

Check if the loaves and rolls are fresh using the bags or gloves provided. Is there a bakery in the supermarket? Is there a smell of freshly baked bread in the air?

"Bread riots" have been occurring regularly in the Arab world since the 1980s, triggered by a rise in the price of bread due to World Bank and International Monetary Fund policies and austerity programmes such as reducing agricultural subsidies to encourage the growing of export fruit and vegetable crops instead of grains. Some of the riots were quite violent such as the one in Tunisia in 1983-84 in which over 100 rioters were killed. In 2007-2008, in Egypt, the world's largest wheat importer, bread prices rose by 37%. With unemployment rising as well, more people depended on subsidised bread – but the government did not provide enough. The first protests of the Arab spring in Tunisia in December 2010 were dismissed as another bout of bread riots. In reality it was food scarcity that was the catalyst of the Arab revolutions, not Twitter or Facebook as commonly believed. And that food scarcity was the result of considerably diminished global crops, in turn caused by global warming and climate volatility.

Let's try to find the flowers section now.

[checkout beep]

Smell as many flowers as you can. What does the smell remind you of? When did you last buy flowers? Who did you give them to?

Most fresh flowers sold in Europe are grown in East Africa where they are cut and transported by plane. They are usually doused with a toxic cocktail of fungicides, insecticides, and herbicides. Many of these chemicals banned in Europe, slowly poison the unprotected, mostly female workers and the local ecosystems. Growing roses, for example, requires seven times more pesticides than corn and some bouquets contain as many as 43 different pesticides, many of them carcinogenic. Flowers also contain up to 95% water - a rather scarce resource in the countries they are grown in.

Now try to imagine you are someone else, someone you know or you don't know at all, doing shopping. It could be your friend's mother, a celebrity, a newly arrived migrant who doesn't speak the language, or a student. What are they buying? Put in your basket some things that you would never normally buy, contemplate your choices for a moment, then place them back on their shelves.

[checkout beep]

Did you know that between 62 percent and 90 percent of our perception of a product is based on the colour of the packaging alone? There are unspoken rules that most manufacturers follow. Children's food products, for instance, often have bright and colourful packaging, whilst foods associated with a healthy lifestyle are more likely to feature hues of green and brown; luxury items on the other hand are often packaged in black, silver or gold.

Now let's go and find the potatoes - the world's fourth-most important crop.

[checkout beep]

Can you remember the time when you were the most hungry? When was that? And why were you hungry?

Before the potato was introduced into northern Europe from what is now Peru, the population was relatively small and held back by regular famines caused by failures of the grain harvest. Although initially treated with suspicion and fear, which meant it did not achieve widespread acceptance until the late 1700s, the introduction of the potato spawned Europe's population growth which led to the industrialisation of the northern region and a subsequent shift of power from Italy and Spain to England, France and Germany. By the mid 19th century many poor people in northern Europe relied on potatoes and milk for their diet. These two ingredients together provided them with all their essential nutrients. Between 1845-1849 The Great Irish Famine caused by a crop failure from a disease known as potato blight and a tragically inadequate response by the British Government claimed the lives of one million people and caused another two million to emigrate. Within

a few decades Ireland's population was halved. Between 1866-68 15% of the entire population of Finland and Sweden died of hunger, because exceptionally unfavourable weather caused potatoes and vegetables to rot in the fields.

When my father's family was internally displaced in Poland during WWII he remembers finding frozen potatoes and swedes in a field. This was the only food the family had for weeks. Freezing raw potatoes converts starch to sugar so they had a strange sweet flavour and dark colour.

When the Red Cross asked the famous child psychoanalyst Donald Woods Winnicott for advice on what to do with all the children and displaced people in camps after World War II he said "give them food". They said "and that's it? we already know that" and he replied "yes, but that's the most important thing you can do for them psychologically too".

Is there a food bank or a food charity collection in your local supermarket? If there isn't - do you know where else you can donate food?

Now let's go to the raw meat section of the shop.

[checkout beep]

Look at the colour and the texture of the different kinds of meat. How is it described on the labels? How does it make you feel?

A series of studies by the University of Oslo found that processed meat makes people less empathetic towards the slaughtered animal than unprocessed meat. When a whole roasted pig is beheaded it evokes less empathy and disgust than when the head is present. Similarly, replacing 'beef' or 'pork' with 'cow' or 'pig' in a restaurant menu increases empathy and disgust, and increases willingness to choose an alternative vegetarian dish. In psychology this mechanism is called dissociation. This phenomena involves a level of detachment from reality - in this case dissociating meat from animals. The studies show how the way meat is presented and talked about in our culture, makes us consume more or less of it. A more recent study, by researchers at the University of Oxford found that removing meat and dairy from one's diet is the "single biggest way" to reduce one's environmental impact on Earth - by up to 73 percent. The report states that if everyone stopped eating these foods, global farmland could be reduced by 75 per cent, an area equivalent to the size of the USA, China, Australia and the EU combined.

You have now reached the end of the Pretend You've Got No Money tour. Look around again. Is there anything you've forgotten? You are now welcome to continue with your shopping or leave the supermarket.

Thank you for participating.

[checkout beep]