

# Stores change floors to make you spend more

**Andrew Ellson**  
Consumer Affairs Correspondent

If your local supermarket starts tiling its floors into an unusually bold pattern of stripes, it is not because the manager has no sense of taste, it is because it will make you spend more.

Researchers have found that closely spaced, horizontal lines on the floor slow the pace at which shoppers walk down an aisle, encouraging them to browse and buy more. Widen the gaps between the lines and shoppers move more quickly and spend less.

Marks on the floor alter the perception of the length of the aisle, research-

ers said, with more frequent lines making shoppers believe that the end is farther away so they instinctively slow down to conserve energy. If the lines are further apart, shoppers speed up because they think the end is nearer.

Professor Nico Heuvinck, of the IESEG School of Management in France, which conducted the study, told *Retail Times* magazine: "As a retailer you might want to slow shoppers down in aisles containing high profit-margin products, so they have more time to see the products and in-store advertising."

"In other areas, like the store entrance, they will want to promote swift movement of customers to avoid con-



Stripes can be used to influence how quickly shoppers move around aisles

gestion, crowding and consumer irritation."

Professor Heuvinck and his team observed more than 4,000 shoppers, both in-store and in a laboratory and mapped their walking speeds.

"The literature shows us that humans are influenced by the goal gradient effect," he said. "Coffee shop loyalty programmes have us collecting stamps, with the goal of getting a free coffee once we have ten stamps. Initially, there is no hurry to get the stamps. But when you get closer to the tenth stamp, it has been shown that consumers' purchasing speed increases."

The team, therefore, wanted to see if

humans also responded to physical markers that would influence their subconscious desire to reach the end of a shopping aisle.

Although the research focused on flooring Professor Heuvinck believed that the effect would be the same if paths were divided by partitioning the wall or ceiling, by altering shelf length or the distance between lights.

He says that his work is not limited to retail. "There are potential applications for speed-influencing floor patterns in any space where you want to moderate the flow of people. These include busy public spaces such as museums, stations and airports."

## Tumble dryer fault still putting lives in danger

**Andrew Ellson**

Whirlpool, the manufacturer of household appliances, is accused of putting customers in danger by giving out incorrect advice about tumble dryers that could catch fire, according to Which?, the consumer group.

In February the company announced that up to five million of its products in the UK could be affected by a fault that has led several to catch fire.

The company wrote to almost four million customers about the issue but, ten months on, almost a quarter of affected customers are still waiting for a repair or replacement.

The survey by Which? also found that a third of customers who have had their dryers repaired or replaced were dissatisfied with the way that the company had handled the situation.

More than a quarter of customers were told they would have to wait longer than six months for a repair.

Which? also found that Whirlpool was giving customers incorrect and potentially dangerous advice. It made 30 calls to Whirlpool posing as customers with affected machines. In one case its mystery shopper was told that his machine was not affected despite providing the call centre with a model number that was affected. He was told to throw away any letters received about the safety notice.

Alex Neill, managing director of home and legal services at Which? said: "It is absolutely unacceptable that one

year on, Whirlpool customers are still seeing slow, poor service and potentially receiving incorrect and dangerous advice. Its modification programme is clearly not progressing as fast as it should.

"Following the devastating fire caused by a tumble dryer in Shepherd's Bush earlier this year, Whirlpool cannot be allowed to continue letting consumers down. It must clean up its act and sort out this mess urgently."

A spokesman for Whirlpool said: "We urge everyone who owns an Indesit, Hotpoint or Creda dryer manufactured between April 2004 and September 2015 to check if their dryer is affected and then register for a free modification if it is. Customers can do this using the model checker on two bespoke websites we have created, [safety.hotpoint.eu](http://safety.hotpoint.eu) and [safety.indesit.eu](http://safety.indesit.eu), or our dedicated freephone helpline on 0800 1510905 for the UK or 1800 804320 for Ireland.

"The safety of consumers is our number one priority and we are committed to doing everything we can to ensure that the tumble dryer modification programme is carried out in a safe and timely manner."

Andy Slaughter, shadow minister for housing, added: "It is also essential that [Whirlpool] come up with a plan to track down and recall the approximately 2.9 million unregistered faulty dryers that continue to operate in people's homes and therefore to pose a potential risk to both life and property."

## On cloud nine

£65 million in prizes given away each month

Win tax-free prizes from £25 up to £1 million in our monthly prize draw.

Premium Bonds at [nsandi.com](http://nsandi.com)

### IN THE TIMES TOMORROW



#### COMMENT

**LINDSAY MCINTOSH**

The best analysis from Hollywood

MAIN SECTION



#### ARTS

**THE TURNER PRIZE**

Rachel Campbell-Johnston gives her verdict

TIMES2

#### BODY AND SOUL

**HOW TO CHECK YOUR HEALTH**

Experts reveal the ten best ways

TIMES2



#### BUSINESS

Let's set business free from red tape

MARK LITTLEWOOD