

## 13.15: Design and Sales

### Learning Objectives

- Use an example of store design that would likely impact sales

### IKEA: A Case Study in Leveraging Store Layout to Impact Sales

We mentioned in the last section that the forced path layout is not the most logical or pleasant shopping experience for the customer, who more often likes to wander around at his leisure, looking at the things he wants to see, when he wants to see them. Imagine, for instance, if your grocery store was set up in a forced path layout. You'd have to go through the baby food section even if you didn't have kids. You'd go past alcohol even if you weren't a drinker, and through the junk food section even if you were on a diet. No one wants to waste their time on a forced path layout, right?

IKEA begs to differ. In fact, IKEA breaks all the rules, and yet they win in the end.



We learned that customers like to shop on the same floor they entered the store on. Not at IKEA. Almost always, a shopper enters the store and is shepherded right up an escalator to the second floor, like in the diagram above.

We learned that customers also like to start out going to the right. Not at IKEA. Left is okay at IKEA. Clockwise is also very okay at IKEA. In the diagram above, people head to their left and start their way around the display showrooms. And, before you question it . . . you almost never see people going in the opposite direction of the suggested path. That's not okay at IKEA.

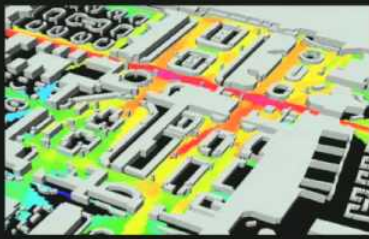
Finally, we learned that people like wide aisles, which IKEA features in their paths . . . but not in their room displays. And yet, in an IKEA display, people will gather three and four deep to marvel at how the Swedish can live so economically in such a small amount of space.

IKEA breaks all the rules, and yet it provides a shopping experience beyond all others. Shoppers clamor for it. So why does this forced path floor plan work for them?

Alan Penn, director of the Virtual Reality Centre for the Built Environment, claims, "IKEA's store layout is a psychological weapon used to confuse and disorientate (sic) shoppers into spending more."

### Learn More

You can watch Alan Penn's full lecture here:



A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: <http://pb.libretexts.org/retail1/?p=564>

You can view the transcript for “Who enjoys shopping in IKEA? (18 Jan 2011)” [here \(opens in new window\)](#).

At first blush, you may not think such a thing is even possible, but it’s absolutely true. Think about the simplest form of that: You find something you like as you’re wandering through the maze of rooms, and you’re afraid to put it down for fear you may not find it again. You carry it around with you, and then finally buy it, because you still have it with you when you reach the checkout area.

This also holds true for the flat-packed furniture the customer will pick up later in the warehouse. As they roam the IKEA offerings in the showroom, they can’t pick up the item right where they see it. They have to grab a slip of paper and write down the location of that item in the warehouse, which is the second part of the IKEA experience. Which table does the customer want? Well, maybe this one, maybe that. He writes them both down, and then finds they’re so inexpensive when he gets to the warehouse that he buys both. At this point, he’s seen how adaptable the piece is. It was shown to him being used in four different rooms.

The “people following each other” in the forced flow format allows for every area of the store to be shopped—every part of the store experiences uniform foot traffic. As we well know, merchandise not seen is merchandise not bought. Almost nothing is unseen at an IKEA.

Finally, to get to the part of the warehouse where you buy the flat-packed furniture, you have to go through a “marketplace” of deeply discounted items, everyday items like napkin holders and light bulbs, casserole dishes and martini glasses. The price is a compelling enough reason to add them to your basket, but again, the forced flow is making a play: shoppers grab them because they don’t want to buck the flow of foot traffic, they don’t want to have to go back and find it.

IKEA’s unconventional choice of layout impacts their sales very positively, so much so that they have over 250 stores in 26 countries, and their profits are in the billions.

### ? Practice Questions

<https://assessments.lumenlearning.co...sessments/9288>

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- Who enjoys shopping in IKEA? (18 Jan 2011). **Authored by:** UCL Lunch Hour Lectures. **Located at:** <https://youtu.be/NkePRXxH9D4>. **License:** *All Rights Reserved*. **License Terms:** Standard YouTube License

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