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## “Out of Sight, Out of Mind”: Pantry Stockpiling and Brand-Usage Frequency

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### *Abstract*

Both researchers and brand managers have suggested that price promotion-induced stockpiling can increase a household's usage frequency of a product. Empirical findings, however, contradict this relationship. In reconciling this inconsistency, laboratory results reported in this paper suggest that stockpiling may have the greatest effect on a product's usage frequency when usage-related thoughts about the product are highly salient. These results also suggest that when stockpiling stimulates usage frequency, it can do so by increasing perceptions of a product's versatility. These findings have implications for the advertising versus promotion debate. They suggest that consumer promotions and advertising might play a joint and complementary role in increasing product usage: promotions by encouraging stockpiling, and advertising by building the usage-related salience needed to deplete the stockpiled inventory.

Brand managers are witnessing an unprecedented emphasis on consumer sales promotions and on the pantry stockpiling such promotions encourage (Helsen and Schmittlein, 1992). The assumption by some of these managers is that pantry stockpiling, in turn, increases a household's usage frequency of a product. Nevertheless, there is little empirical evidence of any such increase (Blattberg and Neslin, 1990, p. 134). The few studies in this area show either no support (Mow-c and Wirier, 1978) or limited, inferential support (Ward and Davis, 1978).

To reconcile this inconsistency, we propose a behavioral model of this relationship and describe the results from a laboratory experiment that is designed to demonstrate the viability of this model. Finally we discuss theoretical contributions along with the implications for the advertising versus sales promotion debate.

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