

Exercise 11

BE A DATABASE DETECTIVE

Imagine a supermarket. It sells only food, drink, health and beauty products, newspaper and magazines.

This supermarket offers loyalty cards. One purpose is to encourage customers to return often. The other purpose is to know more about customers, so that it can predict their needs and spending habits, and direct its advertising more accurately.

To get a loyalty card, the customer needs to give no information.

Every time a customer pays at the checkout [cassa], using the loyalty card to get a discount [sconto], the supermarket's database accumulates data about that customer. This data is about:

- a The transaction itself: what sum was paid, how, where and when
- b The list of items bought.

This exercise asks you to use this data to deduce as much as possible about the customers: their gender, age, income, way of life, family situation, consumer preferences etc.

- 1 Form teams of 3 people.
- 2 For 10 minutes, make a list of at least 12 'customer-profile' questions which might be answered by examining the database. E.g:
 - What is the probable gender of this customer: male or female?*
 - Does this customer probably have young children?*
 - What is the probable social and educational class of this customer?*
- 3 For 10 minutes, and remembering your list of questions, make a list of at least 12 data which might be collected when a customer, using a loyalty card, pays at the checkout. E.g:
 - (The transaction)*
 - Supermarket location*
 - Time*
 - Payment method (cash, cheque, credit card)*
 - (The items bought)*
 - Organic oranges, 0.5 kg*
 - Toilet rolls, 6 packs of 4 rolls*
 - Cat food, 2 tins*
 - Newspaper, La Stampa.*
- 4 For 10 minutes, draw a table with:
 - your questions down the vertical axis, and
 - your data along the horizontal axis.

Mark relevant data cells with an 'X' (e.g: payment method, food preferences, newspaper preferences may indicate social and educational level).

Here is an example; you must invent your own:

	Credit card	Organic food	Toilet rolls	Cat food	News-paper	Etc.
Gender?						
Large family?			X			
Social class?	X	X			X	
Etc.						

- 5 Write your full names (*nomi e cognomi*) on the table
- 6 Fix the table to the wall and be prepared to explain it to everyone.