

Bulk-buy deals failing to tempt hard-up shoppers

CASH-STRAPPED shoppers are turning away from supermarket bulk-buy offers in a bid to cut costs and food waste, according to a Bank of England report.

It said retailers were increasingly finding multi-buy deals such as 'buy-one-get-one-free' less effective.

The findings come after such offers were criticised for offering 'bogus' bargains, luring customers into buying more than they need and not always saving them money. The Bank's

By **Becky Barrow**
Business Correspondent

report, published yesterday, said families remain 'focused on value for money', with discount shops and cheap online options enjoying a booming trade.

It said: 'Some retailers suggest that multi-buy promotions were becoming less effective.

'[This is] perhaps because consumers had become more focused on containing spending, or reducing waste.'

It comes after such deals were attacked by the Office of

Fair Trading for repeatedly misleading shoppers.

One of the scams involves supermarkets regularly abusing the fact that people believe buying in bulk saves money, which is not always correct.

For example, a 'bigger value' three-tin pack of Princes tuna for £5.68 was found to be nearly £1 more expensive than buying three individual tins. Shoppers are penalised for not bothering to do the arithmetic to work out what is cheapest.

And in April, the Local Government Association said multi-buy deals are partly responsible for a £13.7billion-a-

year mountain of wasted fresh produce.

The Association complained that deals on products with a short shelf life mean a lot of food is thrown away.

The Bank's report, called Agents' Summary of Business Conditions, highlighted a number of other ways that families are trying to cut back.

These included 'shorter' holidays 'spent closer to home'.

It said higher prices for essentials had 'squeezed the amount of income left for more discretionary services, causing a decline in spending on a range of leisure activities'.



Slip up: Tom Boddington and his two shoes

Monster error of the slipper as big as a car

By **Liz Hull**

SOMETIMES when you buy a pair of shoes, one of them can feel snug while the other one does not quite fit.

Tom Boddington certainly knows the feeling. When the 27-year-old ordered a special monster-design slipper to fit his oversized left foot, he was sent this size 1,450 one – because manufacturers failed to spot a decimal point.

He had requested a 14.5, as well as a smaller size 13 for his right foot. The pair cost £15.50.

However, manufacturers in China misread the measurement and accidentally made the whopping seven foot-long slipper, which was shipped to him along with the correct smaller size.

Now 6ft 7in Mr Boddington, who wears custom-made shoes because of the different sizes of his feet, will sell it on eBay.

'It was sent directly from Hong Kong and measures 210 x 130 x 65cm – the same length as a grizzly bear or a family car,' said Mr Boddington, from Ilford, Essex. 'I must be the owner of the biggest slipper in the world.'

'I'm going to sell it online, and if I can make a few quid out of it then all the better.'

Online slipper company Monster Slippers – which is based in Dunmow, Essex, and has the motto 'for the animal in you' – apologised to Mr Boddington and has not charged him any extra. A spokesman explained the mistake occurred because of a 'translation error'.

'We are making him a replacement slipper of the right dimensions,' he added. Apparently workers in the slipper factory assumed his giant order was for a shop window display.



Patrick Marmion
first night review

A ROUND-HEELED WOMAN
Riverside Studios, London

THIRTY years since she swung onto our television sets as NYPD cop Christine Cagney, Sharon Gless can still pull a crowd. Even at the first performance of this new play about a love-starved spinster, the Riverside Studios' very considerable main auditorium was packed.

At a glance the audience looked like middle-aged fans, but Gless's performance will put just about anyone under arrest.

She plays real-life retired English teacher Jane Juska who took a 30-year sexual sabbatical after splitting with her husband in the Seventies.

She decides to end her love drought by putting a suggestive ad in the personal columns of the New York Review of Books in 1999: 'Before I turn 67 I'd like a lot of sex with a man I like. If you want to talk first, Trollope works for me.'

The result is a merry-go-round of OAP bed-hopping. Mercifully everyone keeps their clothes on, but the language won't just raise eyebrows, it will singe sensibilities. I couldn't think of a single gynaecological term or appurtenance that went uncredited.

But at the same time Jane Prowse's stage adaptation is outrageously funny. Sections of the audience didn't know whether to laugh or scream.

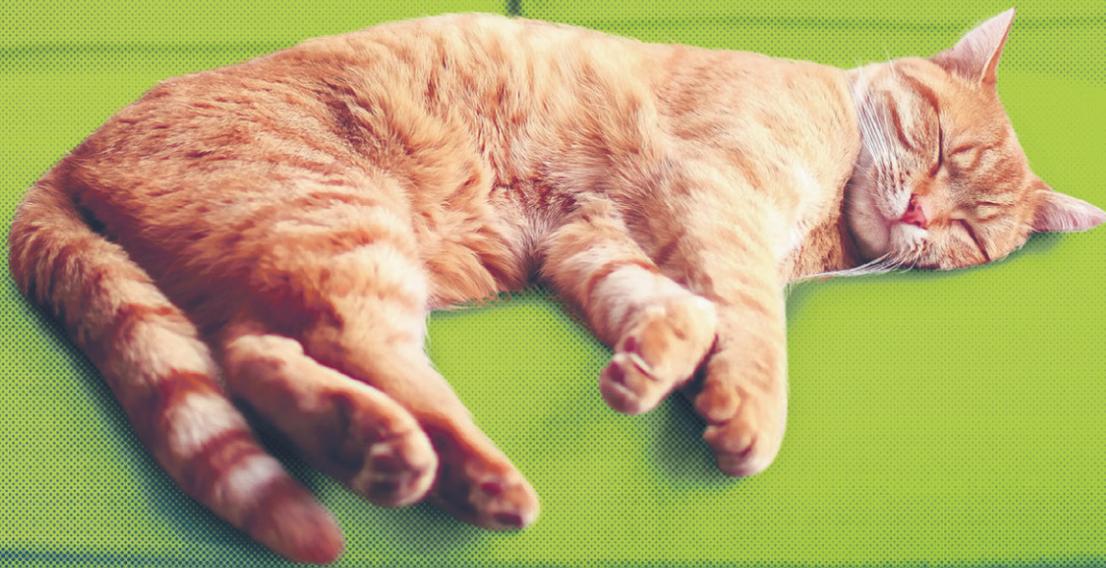
Pushing 70 herself, Gless is an absolute blast. Not only is she a fine and vigorous-looking woman, she strikes an easy, candid rapport with her audience. She is strident, naive, melancholy, vulnerable, and quick-witted. And she's still got her terrific facility for dropping her voice a couple of gears into something huskier when she needs to make a point.

These kind of celebrity shows can be ghastly vanity affairs with the rest of the cast servicing an ego. But here the actors have just as much fun. Michael Thomson is a vocal chameleon, while Beth Cordingly shares Gless's pain as her favourite character from one of Anthony Trollope's Victorian novels.

Jane Bertish is a hoot as the chain-smoking Mum and Barry McCarthy gives a fabulously cruel turn as a polo-necked critic with a wonky wig, deaf ear and gleeful bosom fetish.

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