



# Grocery shopping and information behavior

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# Who did we study?



**Grocery shoppers at Pike Place Market**

# Who are grocery shoppers, and what do they do?

- **“Consumer Society”** – almost everybody experiences shopping for groceries
- **Crosses gender, cultural, ethnicity, age, boundaries**
- **Also includes people who have additional work roles (teachers, nurses, engineers, etc.)**

# What are some motivations?

- Ongoing process/everyday life activity
- Recreation (window shopping, browsing)
- Also: laborious activity/work (unavoidable/necessary, frustrating, rushed)

# Why study this group?

- **Social environment of the marketplace overlooked by most existing analysis**
- **Parallels between grocery shoppers and other information seekers or encounterers**
- **Relevance of information-handling behavior in information-rich environment**
- **Real contribution to design and delivery of information services**

# Existing Literature: Consensus

## Psychological/Motivational (Internal) Aspects of Consumer Behavior

- **Associative Learning** (Shimp, '91)
- **Rational Information Seeking** (Petty et al, '91)
- **Memory** (Hawkins et al '83, Bettman et al '91)

# Existing Literature: Disagreement

## Situational (Contextual) Aspects of Consumer Behavior

- **Situational Variables** (Belk, '75)
- **Social Group Dynamics** (Ostlund, '73)

# Existing Literature: Anomalies

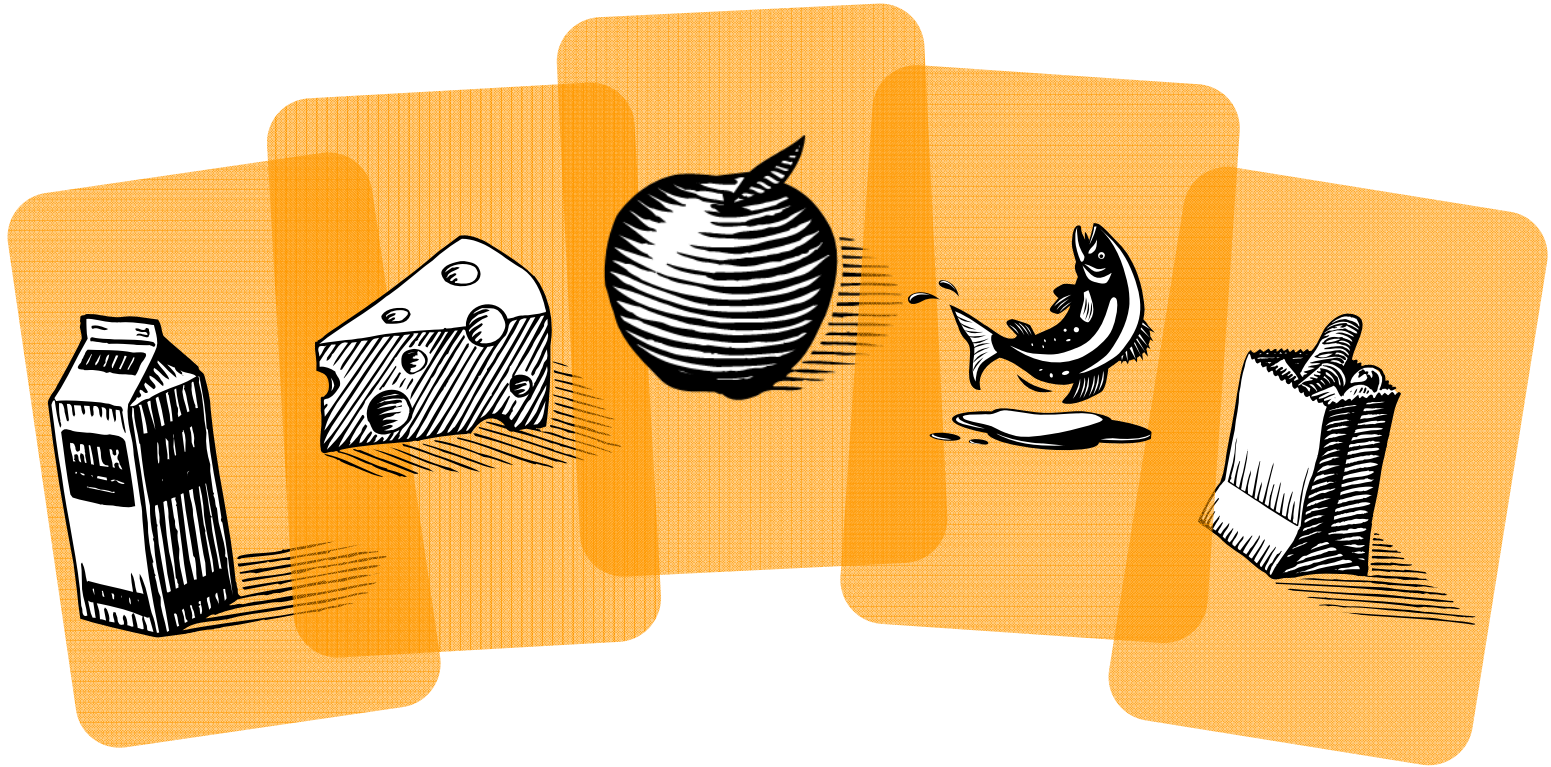
- **Information Behavior is not always goal-oriented or linear** (Bloch et al, '89)
- **Shopping is fun!** (Prus & Dawson, '91)



# For Further Study...

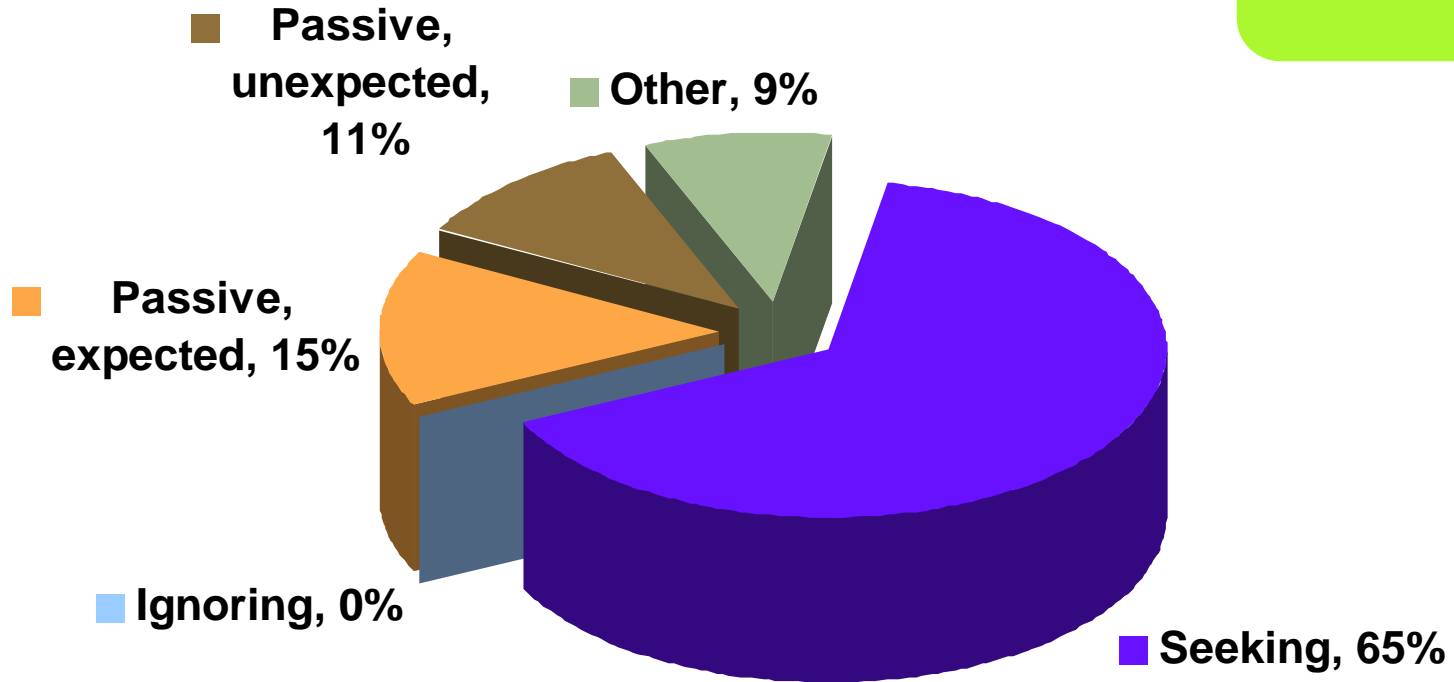
- **Social Atmosphere of the Marketplace**  
(Prus, '94)
- **Information Encountering** (Erdelez, '97)

# Making decisions: how do I decide what to buy?



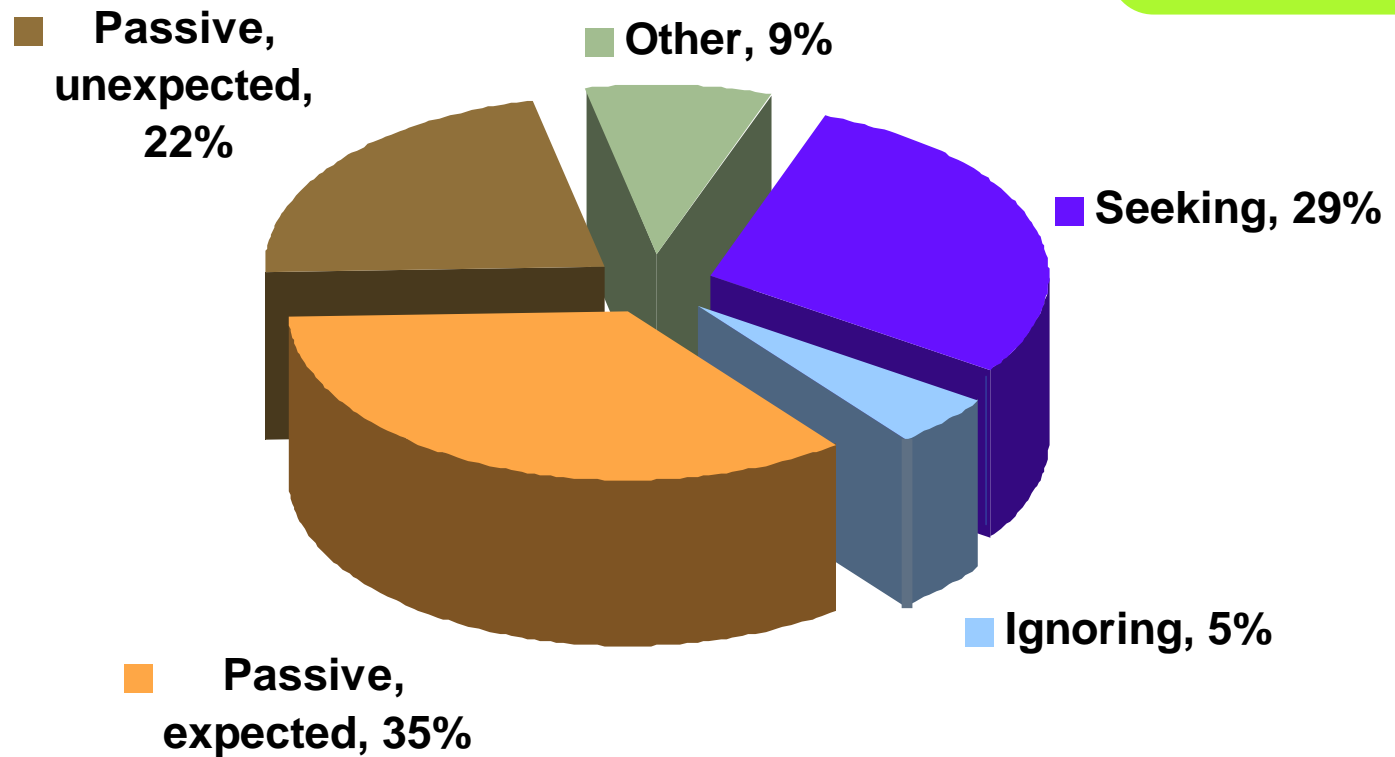
# Typical Grocery Store: Information Behavior

Sample size:  
53 incidents

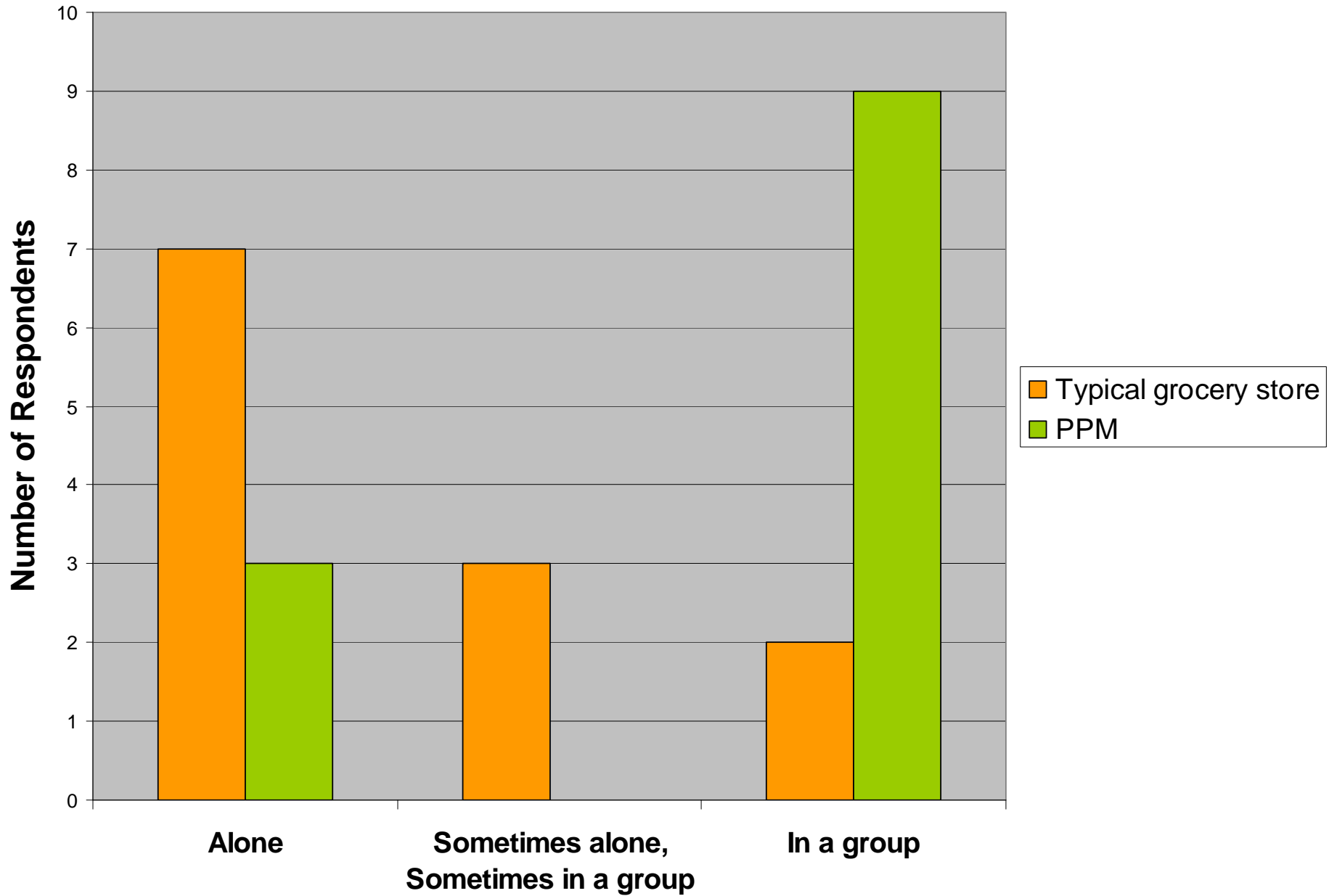


# Pike Place Market: Information Behavior

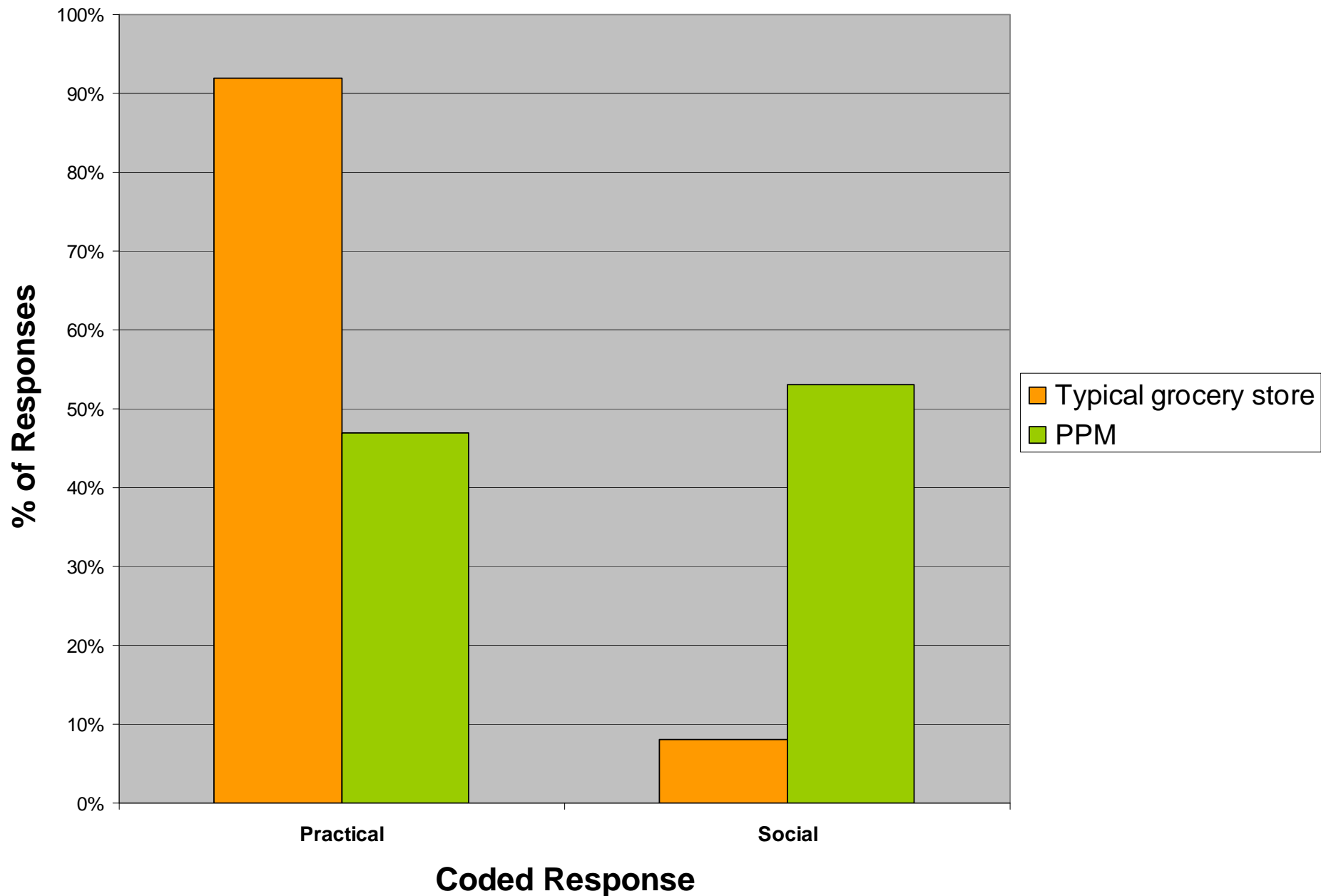
Sample size:  
121 incidents



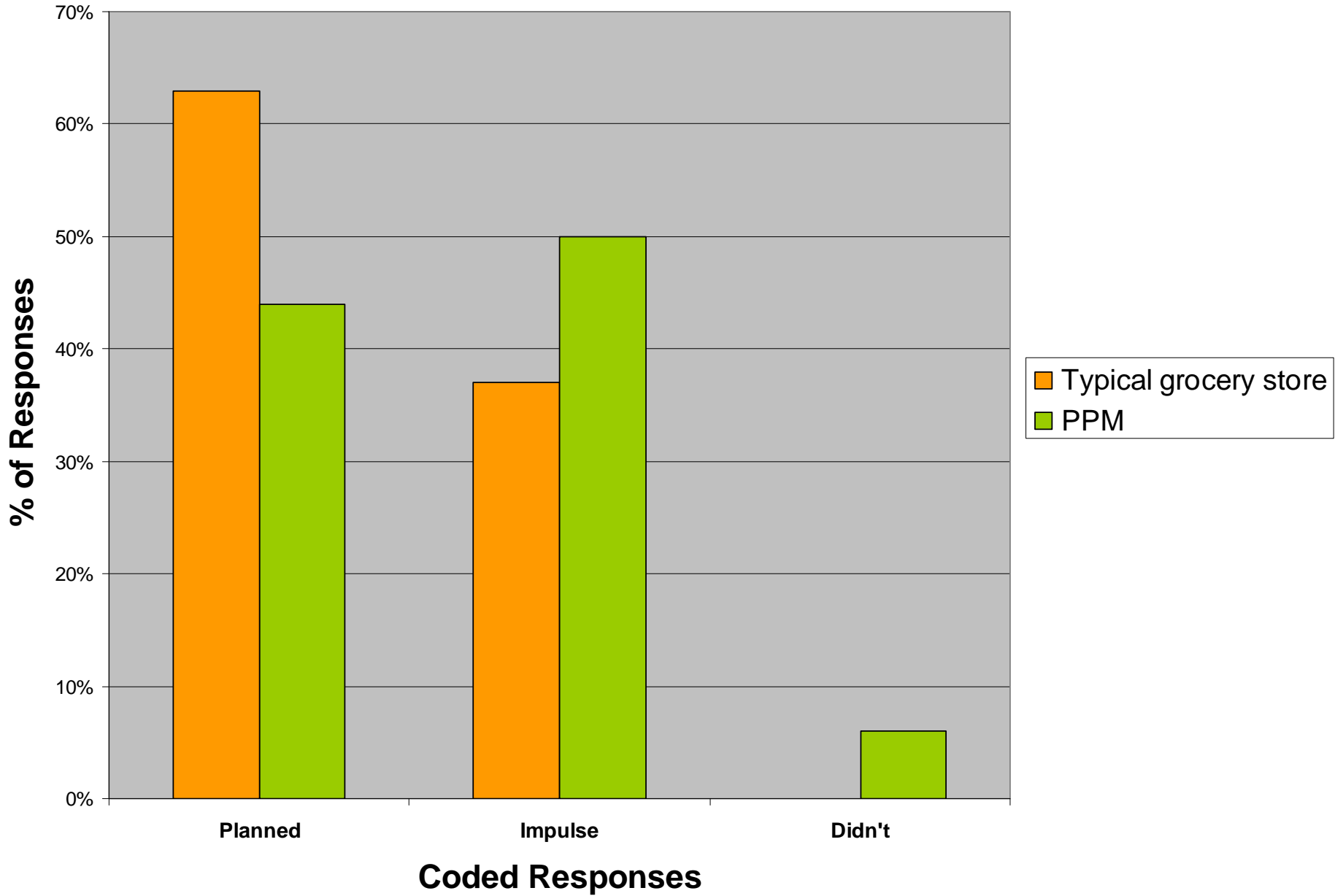
# Visit Type



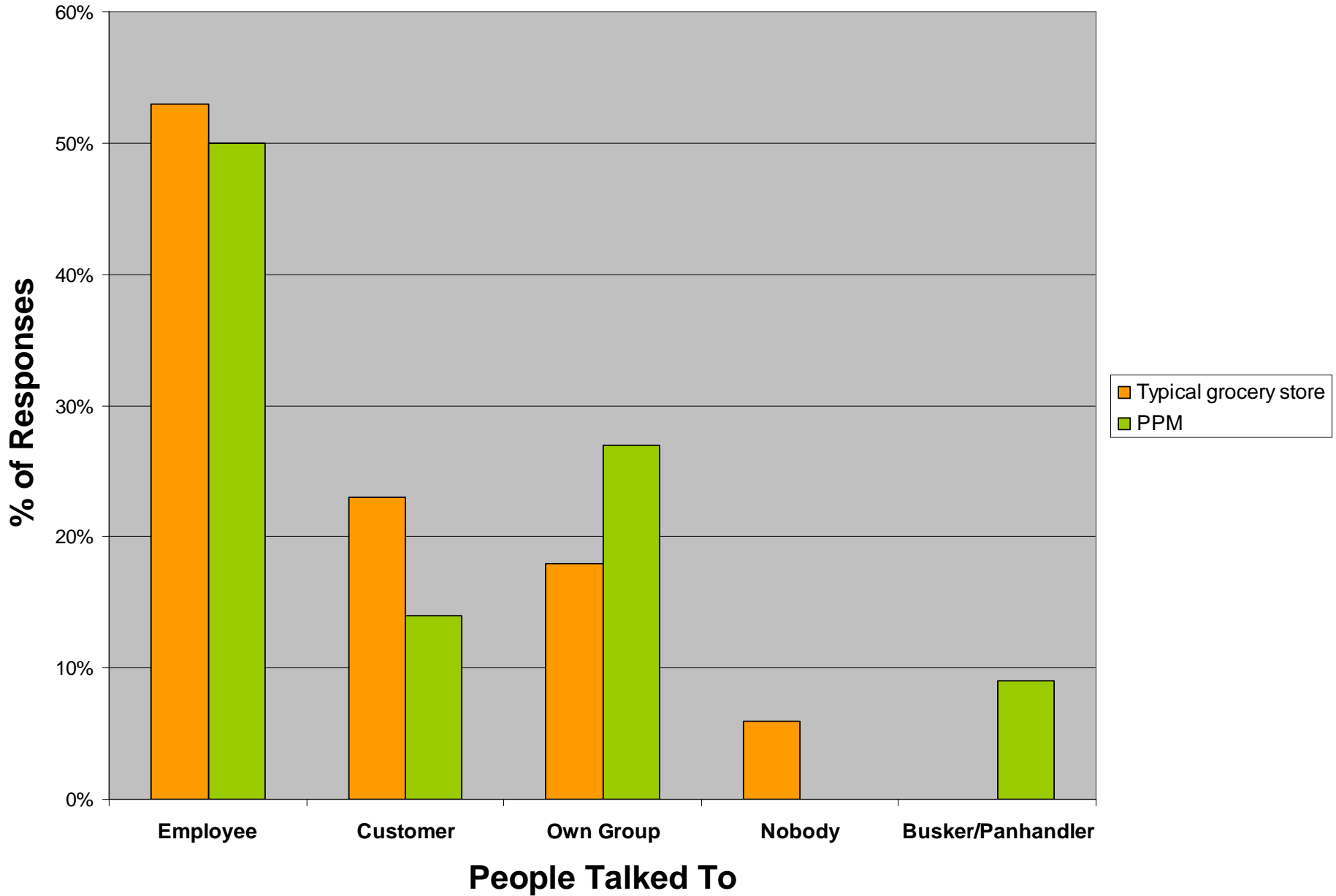
# "Why did you decide to shop there?"



# "How did you decide what to buy?"

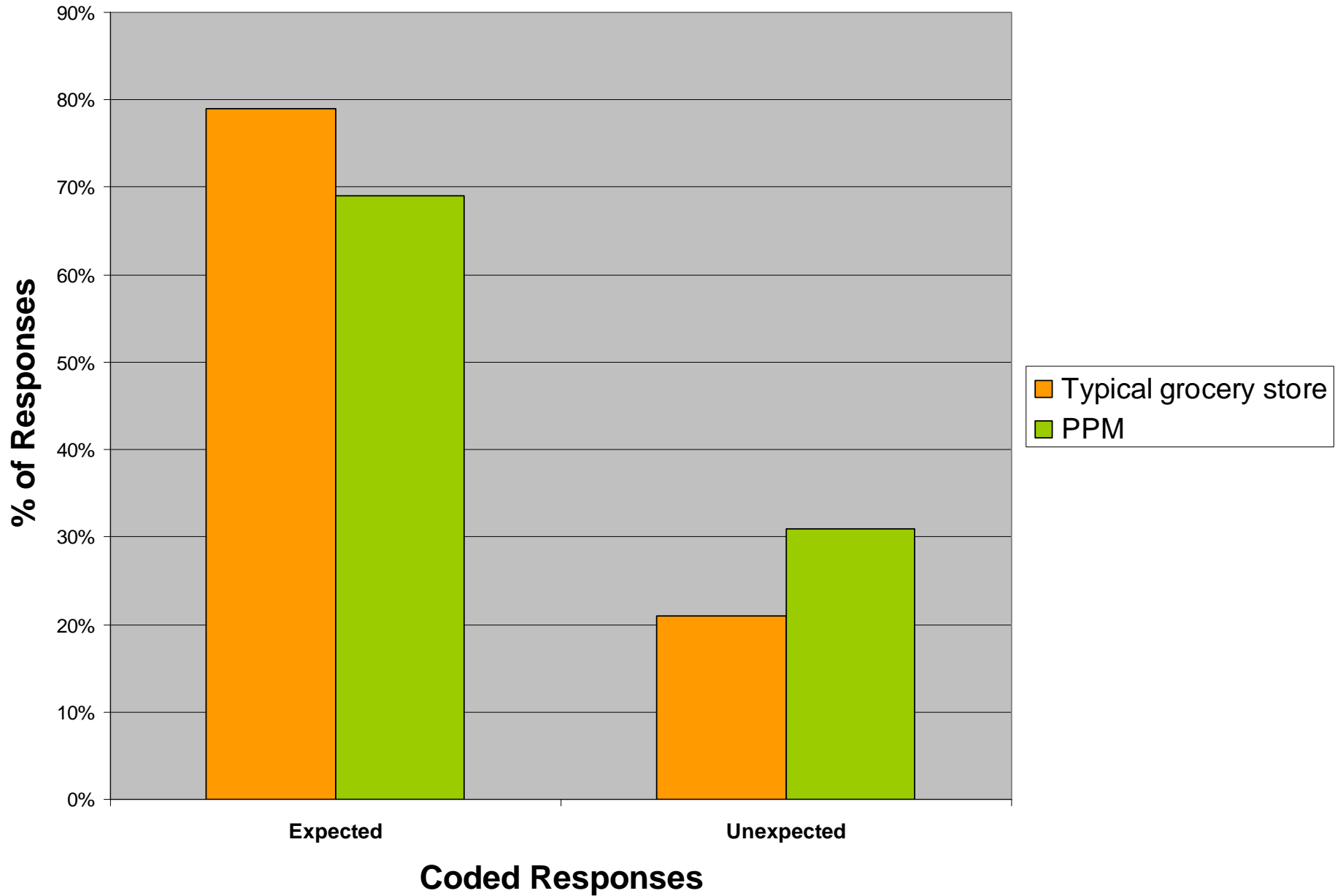


# "Who did you talk to?"

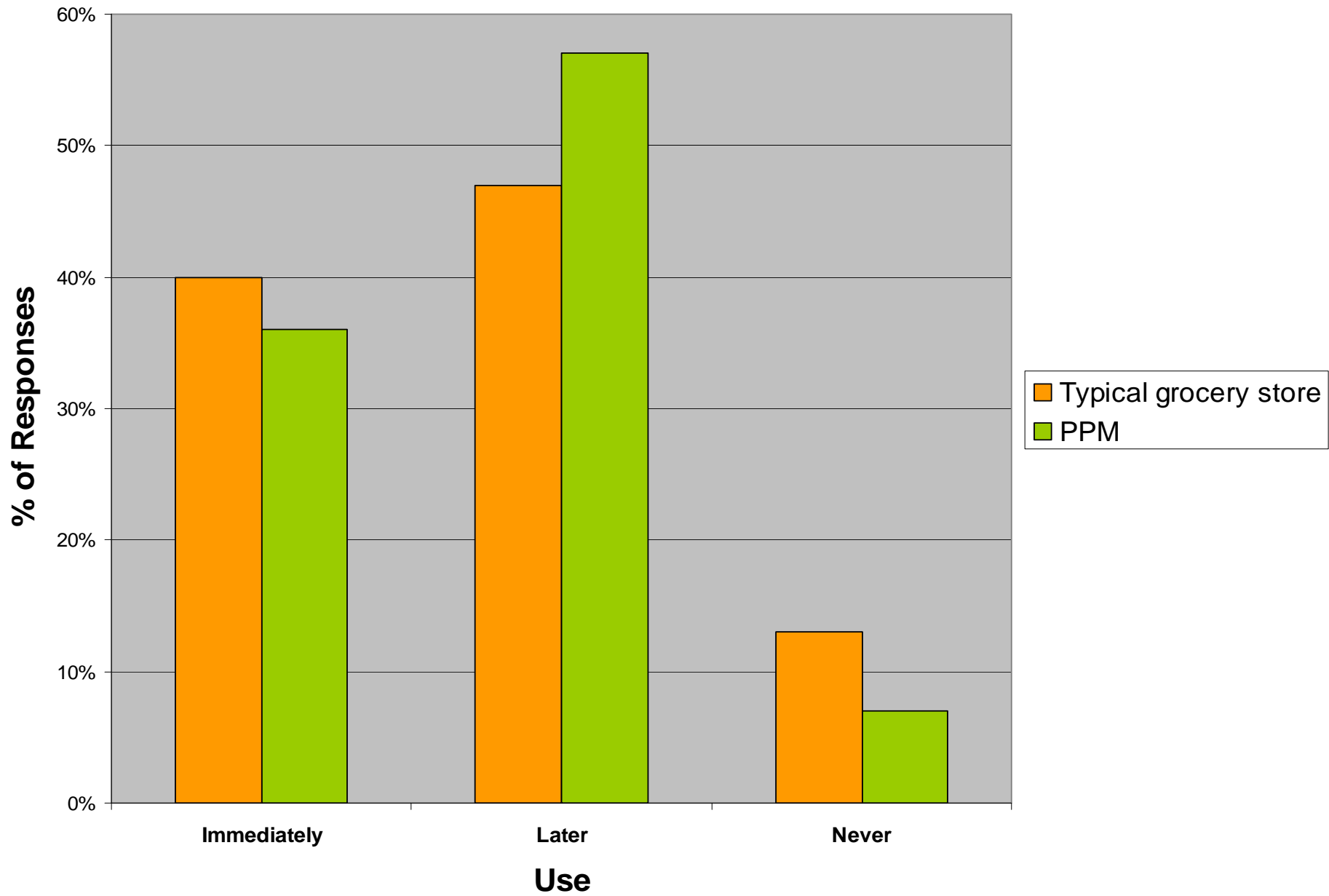




# "What types of interesting things did you find out about?"



# Was this information used?



# How our interviewees see their typical grocery stores

“At Fred Meyer, my talking to people was more **purpose-driven**. I was looking for a more specific kind of answer rather than asking a more open-ended question.”

“At QFC I only find out things like, what are the new flavors of Ruffles potato chips.”

“Fred Meyer is **nationalized**. I rely on information printed on the box or packaging. The personnel in the store **don't seem to know** about the products being sold.”

“[At Safeway there are] **no socialized activities** at all; I did not want to talk at all.”

“QFC is staid, mainstream, fluorescent; I sometimes feel ill going there.

It's **prepackaged crap**. People there are on a mission. **No joy.**”

# How our interviewees see Pike Place Market

“[At Pike Place Market] vendors very proud of their products – wanted to **explain a lot** about these products.”

“Spent more [time] at Pike - interesting, **people there to socialize.**”

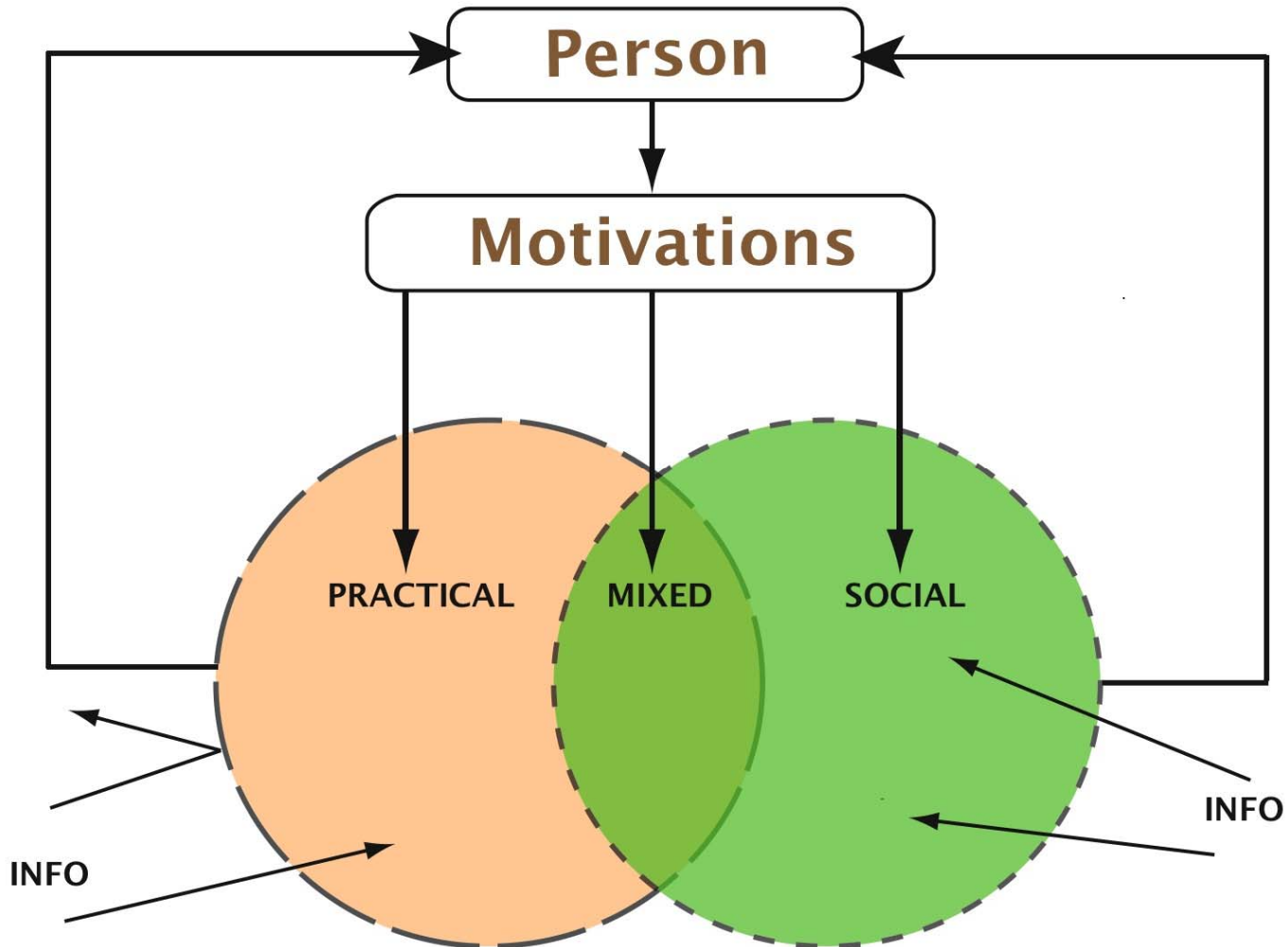
“Also, there is more stimuli at Pike Place Market, **it’s not a chore; it’s a fun event.** You tend to walk around and may talk to other people a bit more.”

“At Pike Place Market I was more interested in **engaging** with the people around me, and we were talking consistently the whole time.”

“Well at Pike Place Market, food is in its raw form; it’s not labeled or in packages like at QFC, so you have to ask what it is sometimes, or ask specifics about the food. I think that forces you to **enter into conversations** more with the vendors.”

“**At Pike Place Market, it is filled with people who go there for the experience. People are more willing to chit-chat. It is like a social event because there are pieces of entertainment there** like the street musicians and fish mongers.”

# Our Model



# Practical Implications: Information Professionals

- Encountering models allow for investigating a wide range of user groups
- The study of information encountering contains little published work, and so is in need of further development
- By doing this development around this familiar type of behavior, we can contribute to a more holistic approach

# Practical Implications: Designing Better Information Systems

- These concepts have much to lend toward the design of more user-centered information systems
- By understanding encountering behavior, we can design systems that better accommodate how individuals *actually* make use of information.

# Wrapping it up

