

M&S Foodhall as site

Methods of investigating - Y1 U1

Why I chose M&S as the site

I live in UAL's student accommodation, Sketch House. Whenever I head to CSM, I pass by the M&S next to Finsbury Park Station.

I often go there to buy foods and groceries, and it has become a place I regularly observe. I also see the supermarket as part of the city's cultural backdrop; through the packaging of products, the layout of the space, and the way the counters are arranged, I can learn about London's culture and daily life.

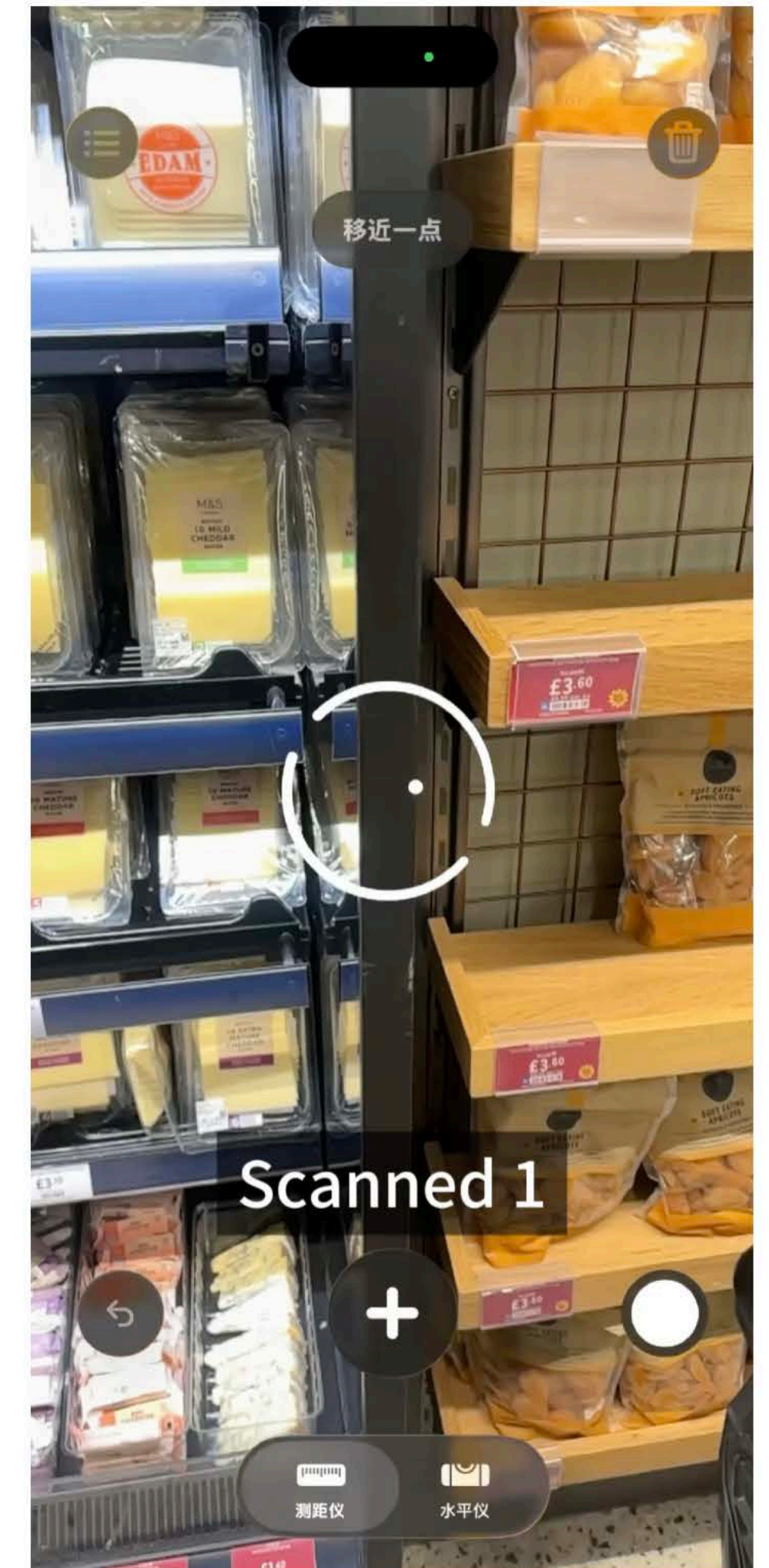
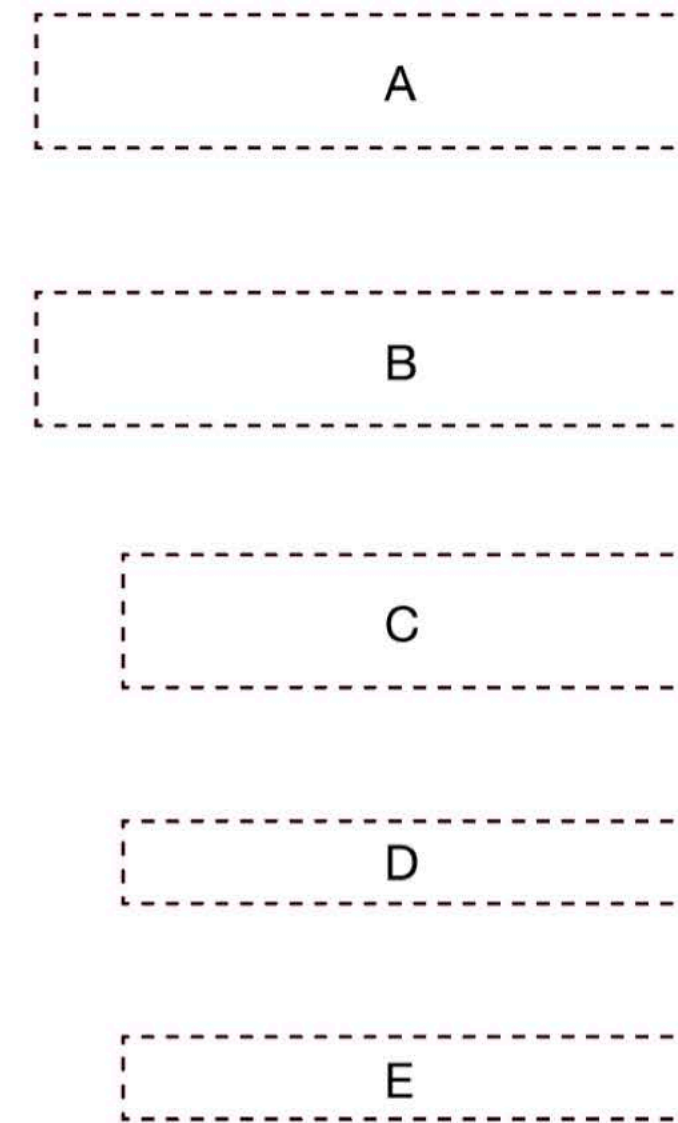


Method 1: Measuring

The relationship between shelves and goods

I used the 'Measure' app on my phone to check the length of different shelves in M&S, such as food shelves, wine shelves, and freezers. My aim was to find possible patterns or connections in their sizes. I found that even among five shelves placed side by side, their length and width were not the same: shelves A and B had the same size, shelves D and E were also the same, while shelf C had the same length as D and E but was the widest of all.

In terms of products, shelves A and B held fruit and meat, shelf C was stocked with ready meals, and shelves D and E carried snacks and wine. This made me wonder if the type of goods is directly related to the shelf size. My guess is that shelves requiring refrigeration take up more space inside because of their structure, which leads to these size differences.



Method 2: Photographing

A foreigner's view of product labelling

This is my first time living in London, and I am curious about how British supermarkets differ from those in China. To explore this, I collected price labels and observed them from the perspective of a foreigner. What first caught my attention was the hierarchy of information and the order of communication.

The messages often appear very clear, some even use expressions like “I’VE JUST ARRIVED”, which personify the product and create a sense of closeness with the customer.

However, I also found some parts confusing. For example, in Fig. 1, the labels on the left and right show literally the same information. I am not sure what the purpose of this display is. Perhaps it is a way to compete for attention among many different labels, but for now I do not fully understand.



Method 3: Diagramming

Marking human activity within the M&S

I placed my phone in the shopping cart and recorded my movements through M&S. Using diagramming, I marked customers' actions with different colors on a timeline, turning their behavior into a structured visual expression. This positioned me both as a researcher and as an observed subject. Through this observational path, I presented a "consumption landscape," leaving human traces in space in response to Georges Perec's *Species of Spaces* and his reflections on 'spaces that are much closer to hand.'

At the same time, I observed how customers acted when purchasing products. Some went straight to their target and decisively dropped items into their basket; others paced back and forth, comparing options; some asked staff for advice; while others simply chose food packages marked with NO.1. I interpreted this sequence of decision → focus → acquisition as a new form of hunting, one that shows how not only personal preference but also spatial layout and information design shape and influence our choices.

In this sense, the food hall becomes a dynamic social lab, where patterns of behavior offer an entry point to understanding modern life, perception, and the interplay of technology and culture.

- When I stop
- Customer purchases goods
- M&S staff guidance

