

# Carrefour quits Japan (Fri 11 Mar, 2005)

## WARM-UPS

**CHAT:** Talk in pairs or groups about supermarkets / Japanese consumers / Walmart and Costco / French cosmetics / Louis Vuitton / cheese / wine / French music...Change topic / partner frequently to energize the class.

**SUPERMARKET BRAINSTORM:** Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with the word 'supermarket'. Share your words with your partner / group and talk about them.

**SUPER SUPERMARKETS:** Talk in groups about your favorite supermarket. Why is it your favorite? Together, decide on the three most important points a supermarket must have to make you shop there. Share these with other groups. Back in your original groups choose the three most necessary points from those you heard. On a scale of 1 to 10 (10 is best) how does your favorite supermarket score on the three points?

**2-MINUTE SUPERMARKET DEBATES:** Rotate pairs to ensure a lively pace and noise level is kept:

1. Supermarket music is boring. vs. It's relaxing and helps us shop more easily.
2. You can get everything you need at supermarkets. vs. Can't get good quality stuff.
3. Checkout lines are too long. vs. It's better than going to 10 smaller stores and waiting at 10 smaller checkouts.
4. You get to eat free samples at supermarkets. vs. Who needs a one-centimetre-long piece of sausage?
5. Supermarket shopping is a good family experience. vs. That's the problem with modern societies.
6. Supermarket staff are unfriendly. vs. Most supermarket shoppers are stressed and rude.
7. Small specialty stores are best. vs. Small specialty stores are expensive.
8. Supermarkets are always in out-of-the-way places. vs. Get a car or ride the free bus.
9. French supermarkets offer the best quality food. vs. Only if you want to buy cheese in bulk.
10. Supermarket carts / trolleys are too small. vs. Go shopping more often.

## PRE-READING IDEAS

**WORD SEARCH:** Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... of the words 'super' and 'market'.

**TRUE FALSE:** Guess whether the following statements about the article are true or false:

- a. Carrefour is the world's second largest retailer. T / F
- b. Carrefour entered Japan twenty years ago. T / F
- c. Japanese consumers are famous for their love of quality. T / F
- d. Japan is experiencing poor consumer spending and a recession. T / F
- e. Sales in Japanese supermarkets fell by 3.5 per cent last year. T / F
- f. Other European retail giants, such as Sephora and Boots, succeeded in Japan. T / F
- g. American retailers Wal-Mart and Costco are doing better than Carrefour. T / F
- h. One Carrefour shopper said she hated the French in-store music. T / F

**SYNONYM MATCH:** Match the following synonyms from the article:

- |                   |             |
|-------------------|-------------|
| (a) withdrawal    | lure        |
| (b) retains       | get around  |
| (c) entice        | withdrawal  |
| (d) sophisticated | keeps       |
| (e) overcome      | tough       |
| (f) pullout       | departure   |
| (g) crack         | withdrew    |
| (h) retreated     | traditional |
| (i) stiff         | upmarket    |
| (j) home-grown    | succeed in  |

**PHRASE MATCH:** Match the following phrases based on the article:

- |                              |                                  |
|------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| (a) The world's second       | rights to the Carrefour brand    |
| (b) announced its withdrawal | in bulk                          |
| (c) supermarket              | by 3.5 per cent last year        |
| (d) retains full             | competition from local operators |
| (e) it failed to             | the Japanese market              |
| (f) Supermarket sales fell   | from the Japanese market         |
| (g) crack                    | disappointment                   |
| (h) amid stiff               | chain                            |
| (i) selling                  | largest retailer                 |
| (j) express                  | overcome poor consumer spending  |

## GAP FILL

### Carrefour quits Japan

**BNE:** The world's second largest \_\_\_\_\_, French-owned Carrefour SA, has announced its withdrawal from the Japanese market. It has sold its shares to Japan's largest \_\_\_\_\_ group, the supermarket chain operator Aeon Co, which retains full rights to the Carrefour brand in Japan. Carrefour entered Japan four years ago, hoping to \_\_\_\_\_ Japanese consumers, famous for their love of quality, to their stores by offering a more sophisticated image, and more international groceries than traditional Japanese supermarkets. However, it \_\_\_\_\_ to overcome poor consumer spending and the Japanese recession. Supermarket sales fell by 3.5 per cent last year. The pullout follows earlier failures by European retail \_\_\_\_\_ to crack the Japanese market. French cosmetics chain Sephora, part of the luxury group LVMH, and British drug store giant Boots both retreated from Japan soon after arriving, amid \_\_\_\_\_ competition from local operators. American retailers Wal-Mart and Costco are faring a little better and look to have their strategies right by selling in bulk at \_\_\_\_\_ prices. Although Japan's consumers love international products such as Loius Vuitton, BMW, and even Starbucks coffee, they still prefer their home-grown foods. One Carrefour shopper at the Amagasaki, Hyogo outlet did express disappointment at the news of the \_\_\_\_\_, saying, "I love Carrefour's European feel. I hope the new owners will still sell all those lovely cheeses and wines, and play the French music."

*entice      giants      unbeatable      takeover      failed      retailer      stiff      retail*

## DISCUSSION

- a. What was interesting in this article?
- b. Have you ever shopped at Carrefour, Walmart or Costco? Which is best?
- c. What do you like most about supermarkets?
- d. What do you hate most about supermarkets?
- e. Are supermarkets better than specialty stores?
- f. What's your favorite section in the supermarket?
- g. Do you like going to supermarkets in other countries?
- h. Do you like French cheese and wine?
- i. Do you often buy produce or dishes from other countries?
- j. What's your opinion of supermarket staff?
- k. What's your opinion of other supermarket shoppers?
- l. Have you ever had a bad experience in a supermarket?
- m. If you worked in a supermarket, would you prefer to be a checkout cashier, a shelf-filler, a courtesy-bus driver, or a price-gun tagger?
- n. Would you mind if your local supermarket was foreign owned??
- o. What do you think of supermarket music?
- p. What changes would you like to see in supermarkets?
- q. When food shopping, do you shop for quality or price?
- r. Is food shopping a nice, family-oriented experience?

## HOMEWORK

- 1. VOCAB EXTENSION:** Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.
- 2. INTERNET:** Search the Internet and find information on Carrefour. Share your findings with your class next lesson.
- 3. STORE COMPARISON:** Visit two different supermarkets and write a short report comparing them.
- 4. LETTER TO THE MANAGER:** Write a letter to the manager of your local supermarket recommending five changes that you think would make the supermarket much better.

## TEXT

### Carrefour quits Japan

**BNE:** The world's second largest **retailer**, French-owned Carrefour SA, has announced its withdrawal from the Japanese market. It has sold its shares to Japan's largest **retail** group, the supermarket chain operator Aeon Co, which retains full rights to the Carrefour brand in Japan. Carrefour entered Japan four years ago, hoping to **entice** Japanese consumers, famous for their love of quality, to their stores by offering a more sophisticated image, and more international groceries than traditional Japanese supermarkets. However, it **failed** to overcome poor consumer spending and the Japanese recession. Supermarket sales fell by 3.5 per cent last year. The pullout follows earlier failures by European retail **giants** to crack the Japanese market. French cosmetics chain Sephora, part of the luxury group LVMH, and British drug store giant Boots both retreated from Japan soon after arriving, amid **stiff** competition from local operators. American retailers Wal-Mart and Costco are faring a little better and look to have their strategies right by selling in bulk at **unbeatable** prices. Although Japan's consumers love international products such as Loius Vuitton, BMW, and even Starbucks coffee, they still prefer their home-grown foods. One Carrefour shopper at the Amagasaki, Hyogo outlet did express disappointment at the news of the **takeover**, saying, "I love Carrefour's European feel. I hope the new owners will still sell all those lovely cheeses and wines, and play the French music."