

Is She a 3 or a 4?

By Alice Vantrease
Twiggs of Savannah

Have you ever noticed the difference in shoppers' behavior when they are accompanied by their husbands? We have.



As a tongue-in-cheek exercise in clairvoyance, those of us who work at Twiggs in Savannah try to guess what kind of shopper is with us soon after they walk into the shop. We use numbers 1 through 5 to simplify and speed our communication. Although it's taken us thirteen years to develop our theory, the categories are now clearly defined.

First, it's obvious to us that married shoppers can be broken down into three distinct categories: 1.) First wife, 2.) Second wife or 3.) Third plus wife.

The two remaining categories are: 4.) Couples who are dating and fond of each other; and at the other end of the scale, 5.) Couples who are sick of each other.

How do we tell which is which? Here's how we figure it:

1. The first wife is always frugal when accompanied by her husband. Even when encouraged to "buy anything she wants", the first wife will many times postpone a decision after discovering the cost of an item – especially hand-painted canvases. Sometimes the first wife will whisper, "Don't let my husband see the ticket" and hand over her credit card surreptitiously if she isn't paying with cash. If she's paying with a check, she comes to a secluded place in the shop so he can't see the amount of the check. She often has us mail the package to her home or makes arrangements to pick it up later.

2. The second wife is never frugal when accompanied by her husband. She doesn't have to be encouraged to "buy anything she wants." She does. She finds something she wants, selects all the

fibers necessary to complete the project and her husband smiles as he hands over the credit card. She may pause and ask him, "Honey, what do you think?" This question is rhetorical because she really doesn't care what he thinks, she's just being polite.

3. The third plus wife is even easier to spot. She walks in and jokingly says, "I'll take two of everything." Her husband smiles too, but she controls his credit card - It's in her pocket – not his. She doesn't blink an eye when the tab surges upwards toward the thousand dollar range.

4. Couples who are dating like to look over the inventory together. They pick and choose and make the decision together. Either can pay the tab. He loves her and she loves him. She can do no wrong. Price is usually a non-issue. This honeymoon period lasts for one or two visits, and then it's an even bet the couple will move into category 5.

5. Couples who are sick of each other don't look at anything together, or even at each other. He keeps looking at his watch and she takes her time. She usually says, "I'll be back when I get rid of him."

And by the way, single shoppers are easy: she gets it. There's only one opinion that matters – hers.

Since we began this game of shopper guessing, we've developed a few questions we've never had the nerve to ask:

1.) What would happen if we urged the first wife to go ahead and spend the money before the second or third wife gets it.

2.) What would happen if we urged the "honeymoon" couple to pick out several projects now while they still like each other.

3.) What would happen if we directed the irritable person in category 5 to the nearest bar? (Now there's an idea – a needlepoint shop adjacent to a bar in a high traffic tourist area.)

We know there is probably another category or two out there – and we're betting that other shops categorize their shoppers too.

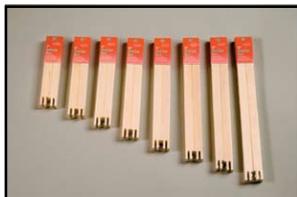
In the meantime, we'll keep observing human behavior and continue to polish our sense of humor with our game of shopper guessing.

Alice Vantrease is the owner of Twiggs Needlepoint of Savannah. She is the author of the novel Charlie's Secret and a grandparent/child gardening book: The Rabbit in the Moon – a Garden Tale for the Young and the Young at Heart. Charlie's Secret is available through Amazon. The Rabbit in the Moon is out-of-print but in the process of being reprinted.



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