

Book Report: Why We Buy, the Science of Shopping by Paco Underhill

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Introduction

Why We Buy, the Science of Shopping by Paco Underhill is a book about science of shopping. The author's intention was to help retailers understand what draws customers to their stores and what they have to do to improve their sales. This book is mainly about a store, from the consumer's perspective implying that it provides a thorough insight based on researches conducted by the author and his team over time. This book report will consider both its content and context in order to establish its significance to the targeted audience.

Structure Analysis

The book is divided into four sections, where the first section seeks to introduce the reader to the idea of shopping as a science. This section comprises of two chapters, one taking on the shopper's perspective and the second one taking on the retailer's perspective on shopping. This section is intended to introduce the concept of shopping, the shopper's experiences, and the retailer's expectations and assumptions both being discussed.

The second section of the book contains five chapters, each of which is about some elements of customer's needs and the fact that retailers are oblivious to these needs. The author explains things like the need for dynamic product assortment, proper signs, enough space to move around, a place to rest their personal items and free their hands so as to shop comfortably having enough room to adjust

into the store (twilight zone) and the need to be attended to as fast as possible given that customers generally do not enjoy shopping in stores, which take up too much of their time.

The third section of the book covers the subject of shoppers in their different demographic groups as well as their needs and expectations and how these must be considered by the retailers if they are to improve their sales. In this section Underhill (2007) analyses women, men and kids' shopping trends. The book highlights what they need and how meeting these needs can improve a store's performance in terms of sales.

The last section provides insight into the shopping and retailing experience as a whole, with chapters on sensual shopping, time management, product promotion, self-examination as a retailer, as well as the big three of retailing, namely design, merchandizing, and operations (Evans, Jamal, & Foxall, 2009). The book ends with the author's final thoughts, in which he encourages retailers to understand their consumers and look at their operations with customers' needs and expectations in mind to serve them to the best of their ability.

The book is arranged in such a way that the reader is able to not only grow in terms of his knowledge but also relate every aspect provided by the author to the previous chapters or sections. The author first enlightens the reader on the concept of shopping as a science to get him to understand how the evidence being used throughout the book comes about. Considering that the author often uses experiences from the tracked shoppers, the first chapter is a basis for understanding how all this information comes about. It can thus be stated that the book is systematically structured to ensure not only a good read but also a thoroughly informative content that can be easily understood.

Summary of Content

In the book, the author starts by analyzing the concept of shopping regarding it as a science and comparing it to anthropology. Pradeep (2010) also notes that understanding of shoppers is seen as a great way to improve the services that they get to have them coming back. By providing the reader with a clear analysis of the shopper through the findings of a research on the 'Science of Shopping', Underhill (2007) manages to bring out the idea that shopping is not as random as previously imagined, but rather it has some element of consistency that can be studied by tracking shoppers, so as to establish their patterns before, during, and after the shopping exercise. The second chapter is a transition from the shopper's perspective into that of the retailer, enabling the reader to change from looking at the store as a shopper to being the retailer. This chapter is important given that the first chapter puts a lot of attention on the shopping experience that one may be confused into thinking that the book is meant for shoppers. These two chapters are the introductory section of the book and they provide enough background information to get the reader right into the rest of the book. The rest of chapters cover various issues within the retailing discipline, which involve understanding the customers and being able to meet their respective needs and expectations. Regardless of how one looks at it, the author provides very thorough information in this book that would benefit any retailer who needs to improve his sales.

Conclusion

Why We Buy, the Science of Shopping by Paco Underhill is a book that critically examines retailing and buying habits. The author does not shy away from tackling the retail industry, bringing its shortcomings

to light and engaging retailers in how to improve their sales by looking at what matters with a keen eye. Considering the depth of his coverage, the author is seen to meet his objectives in the book by helping to build a dependable understanding that is evidence-based with respect to the needs of shoppers. It can thus be stated that the book is indeed commendable for retailers and marketers in general.

References

Evans, M., Jamal, A., & Foxall, G. (2009). *Consumer behaviour*, 2nd ed. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley and Sons.

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