

Why People Buy by Paco Underhill

Book Review

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Why We Buy provides manufacturers, marketers, retailers and all of us who shop with *Blinding Glimpses of the Obvious* (or, what we here at SwitchTrack define as *Aha Moments*).

This book is a Classic. Classics become Classics for reasons. They are relevant, compelling and timeless. It is a must read for all manufacturers, marketers and retailers who appreciate that shopping is not only an *Art*, but also a *Science*. The book was originally published in 1999, but was updated in 2009 to include the Internet as a key shopping channel.

About the Author

Paco Underhill is the founder and CEO of Envirosell, Inc. -- a consumer behavior research and consultancy firm for commercial environments (brick & mortar as well as Internet) integrating analysis of layout, merchandising techniques and global insights.

The Big Idea

If we went into stores only when we needed to buy something, and if once we bought only what we needed, the economy would collapse.

We have too much data and not enough intelligence --- intuitive or otherwise. It is much easier to collect data than to figure out what it means. People who come into your store are shoppers --- shoppers who buy something are said to be converted. But, what does that tell you and what should you do with this? Underhill offers insights into not so much *how* and *what* people buy, but, *why* they buy and *what* influences purchase behavior --- and how to leverage this intelligence. *Why We Buy* is truly the marriage between *The Art of Shopping* and *The Science of Shopping*.

In the book, Underhill addresses a multitude of realities and implications. Some of the key ones (as well as my perspective on them) include:

1. The mechanics of shopping --- Shoppers won't buy what they can't see.

How to make a store more inviting: e.g. a transition or *decompression zone* when you enter the store to allow the shopper to gain his/her bearings.

Rating: 5/5

People (i.e. shoppers) move to the right and look to the right (in the U.S. and most of the world). Situate your aisles and merchandise to leverage this.

How shoppers read signs and packaging --- Copy filled boxes with 4 point fonts will kill a sale -- - especially impulse purchases. Most Baby Boomers wear glasses or contacts.

2. The demographics of shopping --- *Men are from Home Depot, Women are from Bloomingdales.*

Women shop --- men buy. Women shop longer by themselves or with their female friends than with children and especially, husbands/male friends. Provide a play area or entertainment center get them out of women's hair.

Men want information --- fast --- give it to them and you'll validate them and their purchase decision.

3. The dynamics of shopping --- *See Me, Feel Me Touch Me, Buy Me*

Make the experience enjoyable. Allow shoppers to touch, smell, see and discover products.

A bit of a wait is ok --- a long line is not.

Recognize your shoppers --- personal recognition and appreciation is better than any points-based computerized loyalty program

4. The culture of shopping --- The era of the Internet and of *Total Experience Shopping*.

Internet shopping and pre-purchase research is fraught with *TMI* (Too Much Information) -- sellers who make it easier to navigate and buy will win (think Amazon.com).

Internet shopping can and should be a personal experience --- e.g. real-time personal assistance, endorsements and product reviews, etc.

Education and entertainment (*Edutainment*) are a critical component of shopping --- invest in it and the reward (ROI) will follow --- e.g. Mall of America.

Shopping and buying is the result of selling ---- arguably, the *second oldest profession*. With all the data, technology and intelligence we have at our disposal, we can learn tremendous lessons from the marketplace merchants of 2,000 years ago. They knew their customers on a personal level, they stocked what their customers wanted, they cross-sold and up-sold, made their customers happy and became wealthy in the process. Things haven't changed that much since.

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