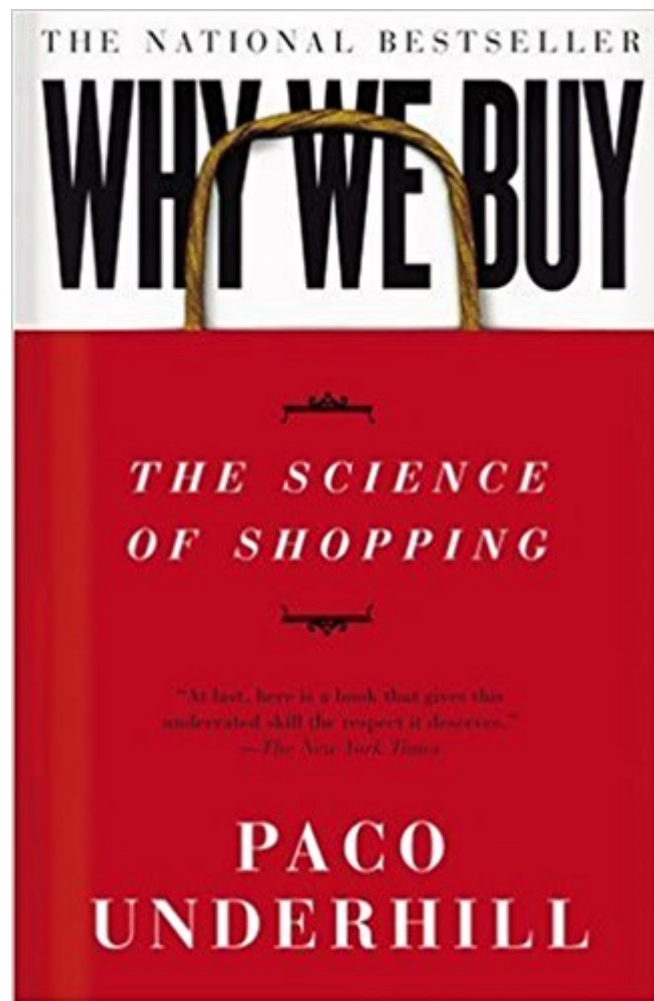




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Why We Buy: The Science Of Shopping



Synopsis

Is there a method to our madness when it comes to shopping? Hailed by the "San Francisco Chronicle" as "a Sherlock Holmes for retailers," author and research company CEO Paco Underhill answers with a definitive "yes" in this witty, eye-opening report on our ever-evolving consumer culture. "Why We Buy" is based on hard data gleaned from thousands of hours of field research -- in shopping malls, department stores, and supermarkets across America. With his team of sleuths tracking our every move, from sweater displays at the mall to the beverage cooler at the drugstore, Paco Underhill lays bare the struggle among merchants, marketers, and increasingly knowledgeable consumers for control. In his quest to discover what makes the contemporary consumer tick, Underhill explains the shopping phenomena that often go unnoticed by retailers and shoppers alike, including: How a well-placed shopping basket can turn a small purchase into a significant sale What the "butt-brush factor" is and how it can make sales plummet How working women have altered the way supermarkets are designed How the "boomerang effect" makes product placement ever more challenging What kinds of signage and packaging turn browsers into buyers For those in retailing and marketing, "Why We Buy" is a remarkably fresh guide, offering creative and insightful tips on how to adapt to the changing customer. For the general public, "Why We Buy" is a funny and sometimes disconcerting look at our favorite pastime.

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Customer Reviews

In an effort to determine why people buy, Paco Underhill and his detailed-oriented band of retail

researchers have camped out in stores over the course of 20 years, dedicating their lives to the "science of shopping." Armed with an array of video equipment, store maps, and customer-profile sheets, Underhill and his consulting firm, Envirosell, have observed over 900 aspects of interaction between shopper and store. They've discovered that men who take jeans into fitting rooms are more likely to buy than females (65 percent vs. 25 percent). They've learned how the "butt-brush factor" (bumped from behind, shoppers become irritated and move elsewhere) makes women avoid narrow aisles. They've quantified the importance of shopping baskets; contact between employees and shoppers; the "transition zone" (the area just inside the store's entrance); and "circulation patterns" (how shoppers move throughout a store). And they've explored the relationship between a customer's amenability and profitability, learning how good stores capitalize on a shopper's unspoken inclinations and desires. Underhill, whose clients include McDonald's, Starbucks, Estée Lauder, and Blockbuster, stocks *Why We Buy* with a wealth of retail insights, showing how men are beginning to shop like women, and how women have changed the way supermarkets are laid out. He also looks to the future, projecting massive retail opportunities with an aging baby-boom population and predicting how online retailing will affect shopping malls. This lighthearted look at shopping is highly recommended to anyone who buys or sells. --Rob McDonald

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Underhill, once a budding academic who worked on a William H. Whyte project analyzing how people use public spaces, adapted anthropological techniques to the world of retail and forged an innovative career with the consulting firm Envirosell. Since brand names and traditional advertising don't necessarily translate into sales, Underhill argues that retail design based on his company's close observation of shoppers and stores holds the key. His anecdotes contain illuminating detail. For example, since bookstore shoppers like to browse, baskets should be scattered throughout the store to make it easier for customers to carry their purchases. In clothing stores, fitting rooms are best placed closer to the men's department, because men choose based on fit, while women consider more variables. And he sprinkles in other smart suggestions: drugstores could boast a consolidated "men's health" department; computer stores, to attract women, should emphasize convenience and versatility, not size and speed; and clerks at luxury hotels should use hand-held computers to check in travelers from lobby chairs. Underhill remains skeptical about cyberspace retail, believing that Web sites can't offer the sensory stimuli, immediate gratification or social interaction available in brick-and-mortar stores. While the book does little to analyze the international, regional or ethnic dimensions of the subject, it should aid those in

business while intriguing urban anthropologists, amateur and professional. Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

In Paco Underhill's informative text, *Why We Buy: The Science of Shopping*, he explores some of the numerous factors that cause consumers to purchase a good or service or deter them from making an acquisition. Through detailing ways in which stores craftily set consumers up to buy as well as ways in which they may inadvertently be driving shoppers away, Paco Underhill writes to both retailers and consumers. Explaining the value of the science of shopping to those on the business end of purchases and making consumers aware of ways in which stores and companies target them are his objectives for writing this book. Unconventional ideas that he shares, some he openly admits to varying greatly from that of his peers, combined with proof and examples from his time working in the industry of analyzing consumers allows *Why We Buy: The Science of Shopping* to be a page turning informative text with shocking insight about scenes that we see every day and rarely think twice about. It is rare for me to flip through a three-hundred page book in the span of two days, but I was very interested in Underhill's style of writing as well as how affected I have been by some of the methods he mentions as a consumer. This text goes beyond textbook information and uses workplace examples of those who track shopping habits as a living to explain the prominence of this "science" in the modern era. The first point that is brought up for evaluation is the importance of understanding customer behavior in a given store and adjusting it accordingly. Paco Underhill gives multiple examples of ways in which he has increased stores sales by 20% or higher through moving displays, changing signs and other small corrections. Validating these points, it is explained that customers may not enter a department from an anticipated angle and displays should accommodate the most common entry into a section. I found the idea of personal space as an issue to be very interesting and did not expect customers being bumped once to deter them from an entire section of a store. Furthermore, it is interesting how much goes into planning the layout of a store and that simply moving a rack out of a high traffic area can be extremely effective in boosting its sales. Another reoccurring point that is brought up is the changing dynamic of customers and of shopping in general. Previous to reading *Why We Buy: The Science of Shopping*, I had not given much, or any, thought to why certain products were placed at designated shelf heights or that stores would have to change in the not so distant future to accommodate the large, rising market of elderly baby boomers. Underhill refers to the video tapes he studies for various stores throughout his text and utilizes one of an elderly woman unable to reach the dog treats that she wants and of the child who shares a similar problem.

This ties into the section in which senses were emphasized as extremely important to the facilitation of sales. After walking past countless mirrors in Macy's and other retail stores enticing me to try on necklaces and picture how I would look walking around with various handbags on my shoulder, it never occurred to me that this was exactly the store's intention. Being able to touch items, see them up close and for some products even smell them increases the chance that they will buy something. The examination of comfort and ease of shopping was a fascinating section of this book, and has made me a more aware shopper. Signs being broken up for easy comprehension, space between clothing sections and clear packaging have all stood out to me recently and realize that they are influential in the shopping process. Moreover, I was interested in the differences that are described between men and women in their shopping habits. Men asserting a sense of pride and not asking for help while women will not hesitate a help desk create a stark contrast. Underhill uses this to highlight how different groups have to be marketed to in different ways and that two people can go through the same store and have entirely different experiences. Overall, Paco Underhill is extremely successful in validating the claims that he makes as he backs them up with real examples as well as results. Every assertion that he makes is followed up by some recorded instance in a real store that he has worked with and is followed up with the solution and result of the solution on the store's profit. Even bringing attention to some everyday observations and supporting them with logic were effective ways of conveying his ideas. For example, to explain how the placement of goods in supermarkets can affect sales, Underhill brought attention to the fact that all supermarkets put milk in the back because it is one of the most commonly purchased goods and this causes customers to go through the entire store before finding what they came for, and hopefully they'll purchase something else. The only part of this book that I did not find interesting or helpful were the concluding chapters. It felt like he ran out of ideas, but felt the need to fill more pages due to the fact that the beginning of the book was filled with valuable information. A few pages were largely dedicated to the plane industry and the world cup with very little information about marketing. But, the preceding chapters would cause any reader to think back to a time when they perhaps have fallen victim to one of the marketing schemes that apparently most stores utilize. Many sections I just found to be shocking and was even provoked to reread. Who would have thought that there would be a drastic difference in the percentage of women who will purchase jeans that they bring into a fitting room versus men would be 65% to 25%? (Underhill 10). After reading *Why We Buy: The Science of Shopping*, I feel as though I have gone through countless stores and have witnessed and made too many purchases to have never noticed the consumer behavior that I am

surrounded by. This text is eye opening and a bit concerning as it makes you realize how much you haven't noticed about the world around you. Paco Underhill is extremely effective in conveying to readers the ways in which businesses encourage shopping and how important certain overlooked aspects are. Emphasizing comfort and ease of shopping, product placement and predicting customer's actions are all focal points of *Why We Buy: The Science of Shopping*. I would recommend it to anyone, even someone with no interest in marketing or shopping, simply to make oneself more aware as a consumer. Particularly, I would recommend this book to anyone who enjoys walking around the mall, like myself, because it was fun to make self-realizations and understanding why I make some purchases while simultaneously gaining insight about retail marketing.

I recently saw this suggested by some retail consultants so thought I would give it a try. If you have a store or are planning to open one there are some interesting points that could help you make the design and layout of your store more customer friendly. The internet chapter is a little thin and felt like it was written in a hurry without much data, it does pose some interesting questions but much of it is already out of date. I hope that as shopping moves more online they will have the kind of data from online shoppers that they have on brick and mortar. I am unsure what the purpose of the chapters about his global offices is.

I first read the original version of this book years ago and still insist that people working on my teams (for retail clients) read this book as a primer to understanding key elements of the retail buying experience. However, as someone who spends considerable time in the digital world and working with some of the largest retail brands in the world around their digital and omni-channel efforts, I can't help but agree with many of the other reviewers that Mr. Underhill still hasn't realized the seismic shift of how the internet and digital is changing the retail landscape and how people shop. I always chuckled at his comments from the 1999 version about how the Internet would never "seriously challenge real live stores" given we live in a tactile-deprived society who crave touch. But I gave him a pass on this since no one knew for certain what the future held back in those days - I too was in the middle of that bubble too and our firm was heavily involved in both ethnographic research techniques and the digital economy and a lot of people, myself included, got some things wrong. But when I bought the new version recently with the subtitle of "Revised for the Internet", I was hoping Mr. Underhill would have evolved his point-of-view on the role of the Internet and perhaps taking a mea culpa stance about his mistaken prediction. But he didn't really. The same

line is in there (on page 168) with no alteration. And the Chapter on the Internet is woefully lacking. A first year analyst at our firm could provide more insightful observations on the impact of the Internet on today's retail environment and Mr. Underhill seems to be more intent on defending his original statement than offering up an enlightened perspective informed by his obvious expertise in retail and human behavior. Let's look at the fact: while absolute online sales still only represents about 8% of US retail sales, that is still far from just a minor sideshow but one might still argue his point that, at less than 10% of all sales, it is still not seriously threatening physical retail. But is obviously a major retail power at this point and strikes fear into the heart of almost every traditional retailer in the market except perhaps Wal-Mart. It is the consumers' changing behavior as a result of the Internet and of mobile along with the innovation at places like , Google, and all across Silicon Valley, that are forcing a re-definition of retailing. Mr. Underhill - the Internet is absolutely causing a seismic shift in retail that cannot be denied. In 2011, according to some research papers, more than half of retail sales were attributed to "Web Influenced sales" (the offline purchase was influenced by online research. I think this is overstated in terms of 2011 impact based on some of our research; however, it is more than just a complement - it is a major driving force. Forrester recently predicted that more than \$1.6 trillion dollars in retail sales by 2016 will be attributed to cross-channel sales and, when you combine that with direct eCommerce sales, that is again pointing to more than half of the retail activity being directly impacted by the Internet. Let's not forget that e-Commerce sales are growing by 17% per year, far outpacing the rest of retail, but, again, more importantly, the role digital and the Internet play in the overall shopping experience is the radical change in shopping behaviors. It is the integrated, omni-channel experience that is what is transformational for retailers and shoppers today and Mr. Underhill barely scratched the surface on this topic which is was fine in 1999 but not acceptable in 2009. And definitely not now! All retailers are worried about the impact of "Showrooming" but very few (less than 15% by some reports) actually have a strategy to address this coming storm. Go check out thinkwithGoogle (no, I don't work at Google) and you'll stat after stat making this point. For example, nearly 80% of consumers are using smartphones while in the retail store and the list goes on and on. And it is accelerating, largely driven by mobile adoption. Wal-mart believes that 40% of all their online traffic will on smartphone and tablets this holiday season. To avoid beating a dead horse, I will end the critique there. I do think Mr. Underhill has some amazing insight into the science of shopping and it is found, in part, here in this book. And, despite his seemingly blind spot for the role of digital and the Internet and its massive impact on that science, I do still strongly recommend this book. Just be sure to put his perspective into the context of the broader set of research out in the market today that perhaps is not as blinded by what I can

only believe is a refusal just to admit "Damn, I was wrong" and move on and apply his valuable insight into the dynamic space that is the evolution of retail. I'd love to see a new updated version with enhanced thinking in that area come out soon before this valuable read goes the way of Blockbuster into oblivion.

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