



Advice

Psychology of Selling

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Consumers buy more at certain times of day

Is this a function of biology or something else? James Dion explains...



ARE CUSTOMERS MORE LIKELY to buy at certain times of the day or are they equally predisposed to buying no matter what time it is? The more you know about when customers are more likely to buy, the better. You can schedule staff and extend or shorten business hours accordingly. If you knew, for example, that evenings were likely to reward you with more sales per hour, you could schedule more staff, even your best staff. If you knew

that during the hours of 10 a.m. to 11 a.m. you were least likely to make a sale, you could consider opening at 11 a.m. (if your lease permits) and completing stocking, administration and merchandising tasks before then.

Examining 20 years of conversion rate data (total traffic divided by number of transactions) reveals there *is* a variance in shopping behaviours depending on the time of day.

In almost every type of store, and gift stores in particular, data points to two types of traffic: shopping (people who are looking, but not buying) and buying (customers who tend to make purchases after a short time in the store).

In almost all cases (pharmacies and do-it-yourself centres excepted) traffic in the morning up until 4 p.m. tends to be “shopping” traffic, demonstrated by very low conversion rates, which means that few of these shoppers are converted into buyers. Whereas shoppers after 4 p.m. tend to convert to buyers at a much higher rate which indicates a greater propensity to purchase at this time.

Biology, specifically the circadian rhythm, is one way to explain this phenomenon. In the morning our brains are telling us we have the whole day and evening to buy what we need, so there’s no reason to hurry or make a decision and hence we delay our purchases to later in the day. This is especially true if we’re taking a break from work or if buying something right at that moment isn’t necessary. In other words, we procrastinate.

Interestingly, higher conversion rates occur at almost all times on Saturdays and Sundays, which makes it less likely that this phenomenon can be answered purely by biology. On the weekend, our shopping trips are more targeted. We know what stores we want to go to and what we want to buy, which is why conversion rates increase significantly.

Armed with this knowledge, shift your staffing levels and hours to maximize the opportunities to sell and serve customers. ■

James Dion has a bachelors and masters degree in psychology from the Chicago State University and a Ph.D. in industrial psychology from the Illinois Institute of Technology. Coupled with 30 years of hands-on retail experience, he’s one of the most sought-after retail consultants internationally. He’s also the author of three books including *Retail Selling Ain’t Brain Surgery, It’s Twice As Hard*.