The Science Of Shopping By Malcolm Gladwell As An Educational Tool

The “Science of Shopping” is an article written by a shopping analyst by the name of Malcolm Gladwell. Malcolm Gladwell began his writing career from publishing a fraction of his work through “The New Yorker”. “The New Yorker” is intended to have a target audience of educated citizens who could be considered either middle or upper-class citizens. Gladwell’s target audience would be businessmen or women who plan on starting a retail business. Or those who already own an unsuccessful retail business and seek knowledge on how to make their retail business thrive. These intelligent people with a great education in business and sales could still benefit from the work of Malcolm Gladwell. The target audience ages technically can be anywhere from a college graduate to a middle-aged person. Gladwell's “The Science of Shopping” appeared as a passage from a textbook called Signs of Life in the United States.

This book is used as an educational tool in college-level English classes around the country. The intended reader for this article is an educated businessman. Also, many of the languages ??used in this article would have been spoken very commonly by sophisticated businessmen. For example, “Paco calls the area inside the door a decompression zone and something he tells clients over and over again is never, ever put anything of value in that zone “(pg, 89).

A related situation that is featured in The Science of Shopping is, how an individual shopper mind works. The main goal is to analyze shopper behavior and make adjustments to initiate more business. The number of shoppers is also briefly mentioned in the text. As well as how paco underhill examines the tapes he records during active store hours to understand the shopper's minds. Paco Underhill is dedicated to educating business owners about shopper behavior for a better sales opportunity. For example in the text where it states, “Paco estimates the human downshift range is from 12 feet to 25 feet” (pg, 89). Applying this to a retail setting would help business owners significantly increase sales by advertising and showcasing products within the “downshift range” from the shop.

Throughout “The Science of Shopping”, Malcolm Gladwell presented a selection of issues to the audience. This makes the reader wonder what will happen next. Also, drawing his audience deeper to text so that they can attempt to predict results. Gladwell used great evidence in the text when supporting his issues. For example, when referring to paco's Downshift factor observations. He says “ never, ever put anything of value in that zone not shopping baskets or tie racks or big promotional displays because no one is going to see it. Paco believes that, as a rule of thumb, customer interaction with any product or promotional display in the Decompression Zone will increase at least thirty percent once it’s moved to the back edge of the zone, and even more if it’s placed to the right, because another of the fundamental rules of how human beings shop is that upon entering a store whether it’s Nordstrom or K Mart, Tiffany or the Gap the shopper invariably and reflexively turns to the right.” Malcolm Gladwell brought forth this as an issue, along with invariant right. Therefore, the audience needs to believe that the problems he brings to light are relevant to Underhill’s work. This process helps readers understand and comprehend the key concepts of the article.

Malcolm Gladwell brought forth an issue in his article 'The Science of Shopping' about what

retailers can do to manipulate customers and spend money. The text states “ Paco approaches the problem of the Invariant Right the same way. Some retail thinkers see this as a subject crying out for interpretation and speculation. The design guru Joseph Weishar, for example, argues, in his magisterial Design for Effective Selling Space, that the Invariant Right is a function of the fact that we “absorb and digest the information in the left part of the brain” and “assimilate and logically use this information in the right half,” the result is that we scan the store from left to right and then fix on an object to the right “essentially at a 45 degree angle from the point that we enter.” When I asked Paco about this interpretation, he shrugged and said he thought the reason was simply that most people are right-handed. Uncovering the fundamentals of “why” is not a pursuit that engages him much.”(Gladwell, 90) When putting forth the information needed to approach this issue, Gladwell repeatedly referred to the work of “retail anthropologist” Paco Underhill. Underhill dedicated many years of his life to researching the behavior of consumers. Gladwell needs to consider all aspects of Underhill's work to help his audience understand Underhill's accuracy.

Last but not least, an obvious issue is a question, 'Should we be afraid of Paco Underhill” (Gladwell, 95). Gladwell doesn’t necessarily point the finger specifically at Underhill, but obviously, other researchers in his field gain their information from his work. In an ordinary situation, shoppers could be afraid that someone is watching and documenting their every move when shopping to collect data for retailers. Gladwell seems to not fully support the video aspects of Underhill’s work, he even decides to classify Paco's videos as 'creepy' (Gladwell, 95). And he expressed disgust in working with individuals that profit off of observing human behavior while they are unconscious of it. 'He has looked at you so closely that you are sure he does know you well, and you, meanwhile, hardly know him at all' (Gladwell, 93). The reader can consider the issue addressed by Gladwell. However, the question remained unanswered and can be considered rhetorical.

The Science of Shopping, by Malcolm Gladwell, is about the science behind your average shopping trip. It goes in-depth about all aspects of making sales, such as store layout, theories, The argument is asking whether or not these so-called experts are truly experts. Or if they are just tricking customers into making more purchases. The thesis of the article states, “theories... seek not to make shoppers conform to the desires of sellers but to make sellers conform to the desires of shoppers” (Gladwell, 95). Gladwell often used the term “ retail anthropology in his work. And Gladwell had used Paco Underhill's work expertise to validate his work and claims.

These retail gurus seek to conform to the desires of shoppers using many ideas, strategies, and layouts. For example, when Gladwell was catering towards female shoppers he mentioned the butt brush theory. Gladwell does speak about this ,however Paco Underhill is considered the originator. “for example, of what is known in the trade as the butt-brush theory — or, as Paco calls it, more delicately, le facteur bousculade — which holds that the likelihood of a woman’s being converted from a browser to a buyer is inversely proportional to the likelihood of her being brushed on her behind while she’s examining merchandise.”(Gladwell,90) Underhill also has a strategy for the space right inside of the doors “Paco calls that. The Decompression Zone and something he tells clients over and over again is never, ever put anything of value in that zone — not shopping baskets or tie racks or big promotional displays — because no one is going to see it.”(Gladwell, 91)

Paco is also very specific and strict about how shoppers should be planned for and catered to. The preparation he takes is very important to him and his processes. Paco knows that if the

store isn’t executed correctly It will affect the shoppers and the success of the store. Paco understands that business can take a turn for the worse if the shoppers aren't properly catered to. Gladwell describes Paco’s shoppers as, ”fickle and headstrong, and are quite unwilling to buy anything unless conditions are perfect”.(Gladwell, 92) No matter the difficulty of the shopper, Paco thinks the customer is always right. He seems to always place the fault on the store or seller! He has a sense of conformity as well, complying with the rules and standards that he had set with prior work. Paco's actions clearly support the thesis stated in “The Science of Shopping”!