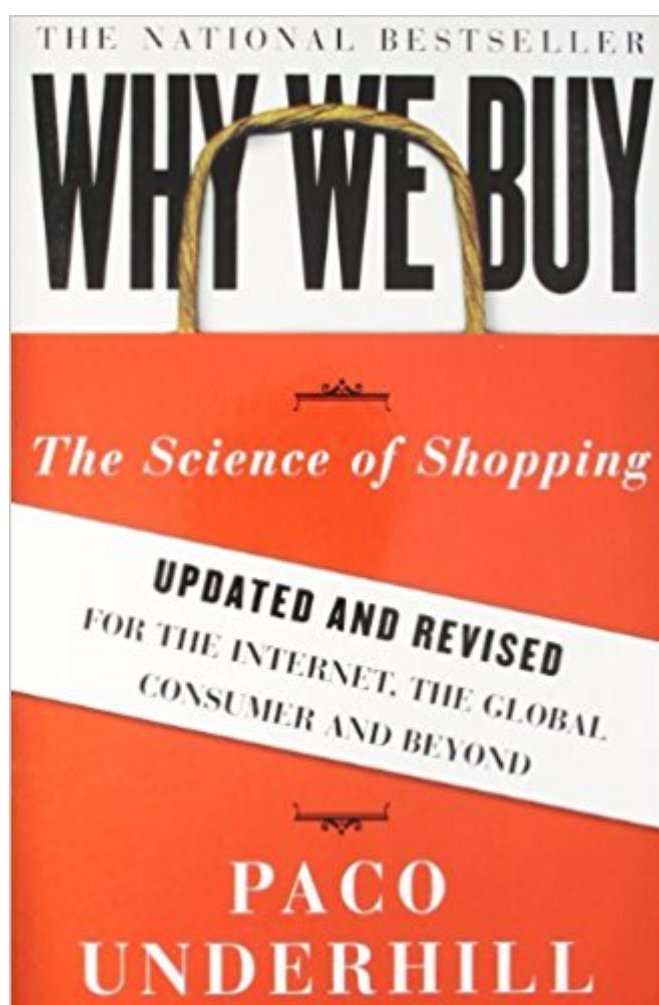


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# Why We Buy: The Science Of Shopping--Updated And Revised For The Internet, The Global Consumer, And Beyond



## Synopsis

Revolutionary retail guru Paco Underhill is back with a completely revised edition of his classic, witty bestselling book on our ever-evolving consumer culture—full of fresh observations and important lessons from the cutting edge of retail such as Internet behemoths and iTunes as well as the globalization of retail in the world's emerging markets. This enlightening edition includes new information on: -The latest trends in online retail—what retailers are doing right and what they're doing wrong—and how nearly every Internet retailer from iTunes to can drastically improve how it serves its customers. -A guided tour of the most innovative stores, malls and retail environments around the world—almost all of which are springing up in countries where prosperity is new. An enormous indoor ski slope attracts shoppers to a mall in Dubai; an uber-luxurious Sao Paulo department store provides its customers with personal shoppers; a mall in South Africa has a wave pool for surfing. The new *Why We Buy* is an essential guide that offers advice on how to keep your changing customers and entice new and eager ones.

## Book Information

Paperback: 320 pages

Publisher: Simon & Schuster; Upd Rev edition (December 30, 2008)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1416595244

ISBN-13: 978-1416595243

Product Dimensions: 5.5 x 0.8 x 8.4 inches

Shipping Weight: 9.9 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.0 out of 5 stars 320 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #8,276 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #10 in Books > Business & Money > Marketing & Sales > Marketing > Research #20 in Books > Business & Money > Marketing & Sales > Consumer Behavior #55 in Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Anthropology > Cultural

## Customer Reviews

"At last, here is a book that gives this underrated skill the respect it deserves." -- The New York Times  
"Thanks, Mr. Underhill, for explaining in clear and witty prose why my shopping habits are not all that crazy. Now, please tell my wife!" -- Bob Gale, writer/producer, *Back to the Future* trilogy  
"I'm in love. And if I didn't have a devoted husband, two kids and a crushing mortgage, I swear I'd throw caution to the wind and run away with Paco Underhill...fascinating." -- Rocky Mountain News

(Denver)"Why We Buy is a funny and insightful book for people on both sides of the retail counter."

-- Michael Gould, CEO, Bloomingdale's

Paco Underhill is the founder and CEO of Envirosell, Inc. His clients include Microsoft, McDonald's, adidas, and Estee Lauder. He is a regular contributor to The Wall Street Journal and The New York Times. He lives in New York City.

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 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 start 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 be 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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