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Take home assignment

July 5th 2018

This past weekend Kenosha and other experienced some record breaking temperatures. It reached 92 degrees this weekend, but it felt as if it was one thousand degrees. As expected, everyone was out enjoying the weather, tanning, cleaning and going to events. My son and I went to an event together also, which was the Jelly Belly yearly carnival. After finishing up our tour and learning the history of Jelly Belly, we went out to the carnival grounds to enjoy the festivities. Although I was spending much needed quality time with my son, I decided to simultaneously study the consumers with all of the lessons learned from the book “Why We Buy” while I was there.

When attending a carnivals, its obvious that the giant rides will be the main attractions. But In addition to the rides, there are games and food items and other merchandise being sold. In Paco Hills “Why We Buy” One of his chapters focuses on signage; and particularly, the position of the signs. Signs are always huge and visible at carnivals, but I am willing to say that they do not get the greatest return on their investment with these signs.

While watching others, I noticed that many of them were more focused on what the game looked like than reading signs. On several occasions, I overheard people going to the person operating the game to ask what the game was about, even though there was a visual display explaining the instructions to the game on site. Another instance, there was a game where you had a chance to win a goldfish, and I witnessed that no one looked at the sign of how to play the game, they simply went to the person manning the station and asked him. I suppose when the consumer comes and ask a question this is a good thing because it’s a potential sale at this point, but in other environments it could be time consuming to constantly stop and answer questions.

Also, I noticed that there was competition amongst games. However, one on occasion, a game operator went out of his position at his stand, to get people to come over to his game. His game was located behind a row of games and in the far corner of the carnival grounds. The position of his signs and displays were at a disadvantage although they were big and simple. After a while, I realized that the game was a main attraction for men. These men were usually fathers assisting their kids in playing most games while mom enjoyed a freshly squeezed lemonade. It was a football game where you had chance to throw a football through a tire and win a professional football jersey. So, while the signs were big, bold and simple like Hill suggest; the position made the games hard to find and potentially lost money due to the position and the wasted energy the host had to use. While signs are needed at carnivals, I would say that they could decrease the cost of material needed by developing smaller signs.

Furthermore, in “Why We Buy” Hill gives and example of the complexities of a study he did with a Newsstand in New York. He talked about how when someone came to the stand they usually had a briefcase in tow, so when they went to purchase a newspaper and coffee it was difficult for them to carry all the items. This prevented some from coming over to make a purchase at all. To go along with that, hill talks about how the customer was often rushing on their way to work and hoping to make a quick and smooth purchase beforehand. So, when the complex purchase transition occurred it made a buildup in customer in line and caused the people in a rush to by pas the stand. He also spoke on how the low position of the newspapers were not visible. In addition, the counter space was extremely high and when people made a purchase they were not able to set there briefcase down to adjust other items in their hands. These issues were due to the architectural design of the stand itself He states, “the owner believed the structure was properly displayed but from the customer point of view the design was all wrong”.

Similarly, at the carnival there was a game for kids that involved shooting a water gun into a hole until the pressure from the water raised the lever to the top of the apparatus. The water guns were not adjustable and neither were the stools. The problem was this, the stools on which the kids were supposed to sit on, were too high for some of the smaller kids that came to play. For this reason, the instructor told the kids to position themselves on their knees, so they could be eye level with the water guns. The kids I observed were visibly uncomfortable and often it threw off their shot. So much so, that when I took my son (who is considered big for his age) he even needed to prop himself up on his knees to play the game. I witnessed 6 parent/child couples simply leave once they discovered what was required of them.

A simple fix would be to lower the design of the game outright, the seats and the water guns. In my opinion, the game was not designed for kids, but for teens and maybe college students. The advice I would give them would be to either A. change the design to accommodate all ages or B. design a version that accommodates younger children. I am positive the did not capture the full potential of profits due to the design of the game just like the guys with the Newsstand in New York.

Finally, it witnessed similar issues when I went to the carnival on the 4th of July. It was the same carnival just moved down to the Kenosha harbor market, I was happy to see a game that involved magnetic fishing positioned perfectly for kids. My son was delighted to play the game over and over, no matter how many dollars came out of dad’s pocket. The signs were at eye level of the kids, because had it not been for my son seeing the game I would have easily looked over it. So, I would say that the designer of this game knew that if they could attract the kids they could get dads wallet. Not much work would be needed on this station if Hill or myself did further research on the game itself. I am confident that they would show a positive conversion rate. Lastly, the saying “the customer is always right” is indeed a fact. But not only when a customer is complaining or returning an item but always! The non-verbal’s, subtle actions and consistent behaviors of a consumers are key to developing an effective marketing plan and converting shoppers into buyers. Although more and more shopping is being done online, it will forever be important to focus on the buying behavior of shoppers to get the insight needed to effectively serve them in their buying experience.