

13.18: Customer Shopping Behaviors

Learning Objectives

- Describe customer shopping behaviors and traffic-flow patterns

We've talked about store layout—that is, how your store is physically constructed to serve the customer. Now we're going to talk a little bit about customer traffic-flow patterns, or how your customer walks through the store.

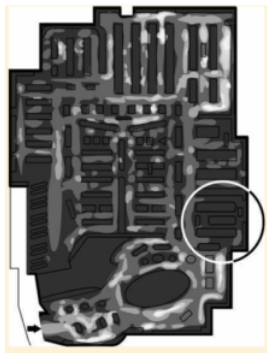
Remember that customers can only buy the merchandise they see. If your layout doesn't encourage them to move past the merchandise you have on display, they aren't going to buy it. Or, as they say in retail, you won't see sales conversion for those products.

This is a good time to remind you about those customer behaviors we discussed in the last section:

- Shoppers enter and almost always turn right, walking counterclockwise
- Shoppers avoid upper and lower floors, they like to shop the floor they entered on
- Shoppers hate narrow aisles
- Shoppers need to “orient” themselves before starting to shop the store

Any part of your store layout that doesn't serve these four customer behaviors in mind is going to fail you.

Let's take a look at a store layout and a heat map of its traffic flow.^[1]



It appears this store is mostly a grid format, with a little free form or “mixed layout” going on near the entrance to add some visual interest. Is this layout working for the retailer? Let's take a look at those customer behaviors and see if all of their shopping layout needs have been met.

Does this store allow for counterclockwise walking? It does! In fact, it doesn't give the customer any choice, turning left would be walking into the storage area of the store. They have to go right.

Does this store have upper and lower floors? It's hard to determine from this drawing. We'll say no.

Does this store have wide enough aisles? It would appear not! Look at the area that's circled. The fixtures there are set quite close together. And the heat map shows that customers aren't going back there. The merchandise the retailer has displayed there is going unseen by customers (and is therefore not purchased).

Does this store have a “transition zone”? It absolutely does. The area right after the entrance is open and clean, and the first fixtures aren't for another few feet.

This quick analysis lets us know that the retailer's customer traffic flow through the store isn't what he hoped in certain areas, and he's maybe not converting as well as he could be. We know that customers aren't going back there because they don't want to shop in tight spaces, so traffic flow could be improved by removing a fixture and making the area easier to walk through.

In the next section, we'll study some examples of store layouts and how a retailer can leverage those layouts to influence customer traffic flow and increase sales conversion.

? Practice Questions

<https://assessments.lumenlearning.co...sessments/9290>

1. Ebster, Claus & Marion Garaus. *Store Design and Visual Merchandising: Creating Store Space that Encourages Buying*, Figure 1.5 ↩

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