

# Why do shoppers leave a store without buying anything?

*Most retailers have been heavily investing in improving customer experience, encouraging more shoppers into their stores and trying to increase the number of purchases on each visit. Some of those investments have paid off handsomely while some others have not. The big challenge for many retailers is being able to secure and prioritise the investment opportunities that are likely to have the most impact on sales. To help retailers with this challenge Pierhouse asked over 250 shoppers a key question that stores might find it awkward to ask for themselves “Why do shoppers walk out of a store without buying anything?”*

## The Survey

The survey was carried out over a two week period in October 2013. Respondents were asked to score from 1-10 on how likely or unlikely they were to walk out of a store based on common situations they may find themselves in. They were also given the opportunity to add more reasons why they might leave a store without buying anything or to expand on some of their answers. 22% of respondents completed this optional section.

## Showrooming

We deliberately did not use the word ‘showrooming’ in the survey because people interpret it in a wide range of different ways so instead we asked a very specific question. “How likely are you to leave a store without buying because you found a better offer from a competitor on your smartphone?”

Perhaps not surprisingly 64% said that it was likely that they would. This included 24% who said that it was highly likely. On the other hand 36% of respondents said that they were unlikely to leave a store for this reason including more than 13% who said that it was highly unlikely.

In the comments sections a lot of people made the point that they enjoyed walking around stores browsing and only making a purchase if something really caught their eye. No one used the word showrooming but some people used the broader term research.

“Are you showrooming or just browsing?”

## The top reason for leaving a store without buying anything

A whopping 91% said that they were likely to leave a store without buying anything if they could not find a specific product that they wanted. This included 59% who were highly likely to do so. The obvious point for retailers is to ensure that they maintain the right stock levels because not only have they lost the sale of one product but also the potential to make other sales while the shopper was in the store.

Digging a little deeper into the comments it is apparent that some shoppers could not find a product even though it was actually in the store. This could be due to poor or inadequate in-store signage or perhaps the product was in an unexpected location. The impact of all of these factors, including product availability, could be mitigated if a knowledgeable member of staff was available who could locate the product, advise when it would be available, order it for them or offer a suitable alternate product. Of course they would also be able to offer related products too.

## Store staff

The number two issue that shoppers identified as a reason why they would leave a store without buying was unhelpful staff. 41% of respondents said that they were highly likely to leave for this reason. In addition 40% of shoppers added written comments about store staff. Most comments

could be put in one of two equal sized buckets labelled. “Too little attention” or “Too much attention”.

41% highly likely to leave because of unhelpful staff

### Too little attention

A major risk of providing too little attention is clearly illustrated in the previous section on finding a specific product but what are the other issues that upset shoppers? Lack of product knowledge fits into this bucket but there were many more comments about staff availability. It’s very clear that shoppers dislike seeing groups of staff talking to each other or appearing to be unavailable to help them because they were busy in what one shopper described as “shop world not customer world.”

### Too much attention

Top of the too much attention category were comments about staff being too pushy and attempting to pressurise shoppers to buy. One shopper summed up the views of many people with this comment. “Following me around a store will never lead to a sale”.

As you read these results it is important to remember that the question is about why shoppers leave a store. It is therefore going to focus on negative aspects and leave very little opportunity to make positive comments and scores. Many store staff do excellent jobs.

We plan to do another survey titled “Why do you buy products from specific stores” to correct the balance.

## Prices

As a reason to leave a store without making a purchase, price came in at the number three slot. While 83% of shoppers are on the “likely to go elsewhere” scale, 17% stated they are somewhere on the “unlikely to go elsewhere” spectrum.

In order to be able to make a decision based on price a shopper first needs to know what the price of the product actually is. If they can't find the price 63% of shoppers are likely to leave the store without making a purchase. In fact the importance of getting the correct and most relevant information at the shelf edge increases when reviewing other results. For example 62% of respondents are on the “likely to leave the store” scale if there is not enough information about the product. 61% said that they are likely to leave if the promotional offer is confusing and 43% fell into that category if the text on the price ticket was too small.

63% of shoppers  
likely to leave if they  
can't see the price

“Price” is certainly about more than the absolute price of the product.

## Queues, stores and sound

Many retailers have been putting a lot of effort into reducing queuing but it remains a key factor that can drive a shopper from a store. 26% of shoppers state that they are highly likely to leave a store if the queue is too long. Certain retailers were specifically named in comments.

A lot of money has been spent refurbishing stores and very high investments continue to be made. This action is strongly supported by the survey where 74% of respondents said they are likely to leave stores that are cluttered and unwelcoming. In fact 26% of people who completed the survey state that they are highly likely to go to another store.

It wasn't a specific question but loud music was commented on by a significant number of people who claimed that they would just walk out straight away. Others would put up with it if everything else worked well for them but they still left the store as soon as possible. The third category added it as one of several factors that caused them to leave the store. One shopper posed the question “Is the music only there for the benefit of the staff?”

## Summary

Shoppers have to be able to find the products that they want, their prices, related product information and access to helpful

staff. These are the mandatory things that all stores have to get right but many of our respondents state that they experience significant shortcomings.

Other factors such as store clutter, loud music and even text that's too small to read on tickets all make a difference. Added together they can make a big difference and shoppers will leave without buying anything.

While showrooming certainly exists care has to be taken to exclude from the definition what shoppers have always been doing. Just browsing.

## Finally

A big thank you to everyone who completed the survey and gave us their extensive comments.

If you would like to know more about the findings in the survey or discuss how to reduce many of the risks at the shelf edge we'd be pleased to talk with you.

## About Pierhouse

Pierhouse helps retailers around the world increase their sales by automating the production and management of in-store signage and ticketing. Our retail signage software ensures that shoppers can easily see all the information needed to make a buying decision about every product in your store and help convince them to actually make that purchase.