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2CHECKOUT

Convert Website Visitors into Buyers

5 Psychological Principles Applied to Shopping Cart Conversion, Part II

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Introduction

So you want to convert your website visitors into buyers?

Understanding basic human psychology will come in handy. In Part One of this eBook series on The Psychology of Shopping Cart Conversion, we shared five psychological principles and how they relate to shopping cart conversion. Part One included tips on how to:

- increase order size
- build customer loyalty
- turn prospects into buyers
- reduce buyer's remorse
- incentivize impulse buys
- eliminate buyer confusion during the checkout process

If you haven't had a chance to read it yet, get your copy of Part One of *Convert Website Visitors into Buyers: 10 Psychological Principles Applied to Shopping Cart Conversion* now!

Here in Part Two, we share five more principles that will further help you turn your shopping cart into a visitor-converting machine. Check them out, and after you're done, connect with us on Twitter, Facebook, or LinkedIn to share how these principles and tips worked for you.

Happy selling!

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5 (more) psychological principles that can help convert website visitors into buyers

principal #1

Trust

definition

The firm belief in the reliability, truth, ability, or strength of someone or something

Trust is a key factor in all relationships, both business and personal. It can either stand in the way of progress or keep a relationship strong in the face of challenge. The more you trust someone or something, the fewer reasons you need to believe their message. When trust is absent, you don't just need reasons to believe; you also need reasons to counteract whatever hesitancy or skepticism you have. Major brands spend significant money to win customer trust. They do so by telling customers the story of who they are -- consistently and repeatedly -- in all of the places a customer encounters the brand. Companies also support their brand story with a "brand promise," which might include descriptions of product quality, service differentiators, or a guiding idea or principle. If the merchant delivers on his or her promise, customer trust grows. Over time, the brand doesn't need to work as hard to earn the customer's business. Assuming the relationship continues positively, the customer builds a relationship with the vendor, and might begin recommending the business to others through social media endorsements or online reviews. When this kind of word of mouth marketing occurs, the customer lowers the trust barrier the vendor faces in winning more new customers.

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Many business owners face inherent trust challenges with customers because the brand might not be well-known or armed with the resources major brands use to build a positive, public image. In the world of e-commerce, there is no opportunity to "prove" who you are by way of a face-to-face interaction like in a brick and mortar store.

Taking steps to improve your brand awareness can build your brand and reduce customer mistrust to some extent, but more importantly, you can make small changes to your website that make a big difference to build your brand and reduce customer skepticism.

Make your contact information visible on your website homepage.

Give shoppers the peace of mind that comes from knowing there is a human being behind your website if they have a question or concern. Back that promise with trained and knowledgeable staff the customer can reach easily (if not instantly!) when he or she needs insight, or answers to detailed and specific questions.

Zappos shows their contact information at the top of their home page just above their logo. (zappos.com)

Explicitly state information about shipping, taxes, fees, and return policies before checkout.

The more transparent you are about your intentions and policies, the more customers believe you run an ethical and viable business. If an item is out of stock, or a shipping date can't be met because of holidays or similar circumstances, place the appropriate language on your website to let customers know.

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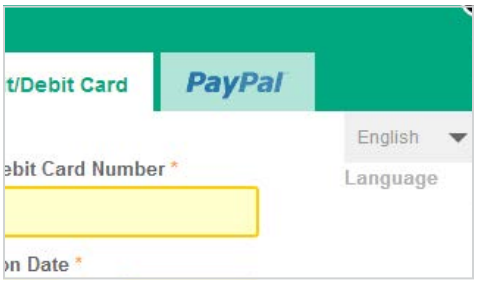
Customize your site for a global market.

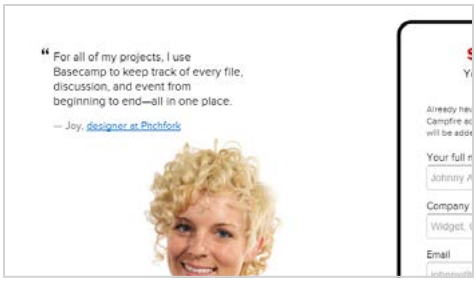
If you sell your product internationally, offer your site and checkout in multiple languages. Although this may sound daunting, there are payment processors and tools that can help you manage the details. Offering checkout in the customer's native language makes the experience more familiar and reduces a customer's potential anxiety about completing the purchase.



2Checkout provides language support in their hosted checkout options. (2checkout.com)

Offer perspective.

The opinions of other customers are critical to customer buying decisions. According to Extole's Ultimate Guide to Referral Marketing Programs, 92% of customers trust the recommendations of their friends when making purchase decisions, and 80% of all purchases involve word of mouth recommendations during some point in the purchase life cycle. Include customer testimonials on your website, as well as the opportunity for customers to offer their own feedback and product reviews for others to consider.



37signals showcases one of their customer's stories on their Basecamp homepage. (basecamp.com)

one to watch
Amazon.com

Despite the many different products it sells, Amazon reduces customer hesitancy of untested vendors by offering many shipping options, a clear return policy, and easy access to product search, pricing, and customer reviews.

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principal #2

Persistence

definition

The continued push toward a goal through obstacles and challenges

Have you ever stood too long in a slow-moving checkout line and eventually decided that waiting was worse than your need for the items you had in your cart? Maybe you tried another checkout lane or just walked out the door? Perhaps you've been interrupted mid-shopping trip by an emergency call, a restless child, a forgotten credit card, or some other event that forced you to leave your cart behind? These are examples of situations that cause an otherwise "sold" customer to cancel his or her transaction. As an online retailer, you must minimize the likelihood that customers will abandon a transaction, even if the reason for the abandonment isn't in your control. The answer is a persistent shopping cart. This feature is used by most successful online retailers; shoppers will know they've encountered one when they've abandon a purchase transaction before it's completed…only to see that the items they've placed in the shopping cart are still there days, weeks, and even months after they've abandoned the transaction.

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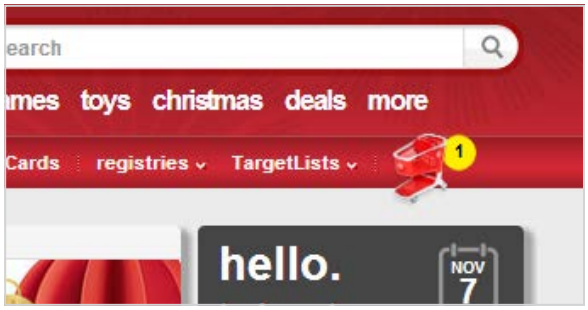
Here is how you can make the most of a persistent shopping cart experience for your customers:

Make persistent shopping carts an advantage instead of an annoyance.

Persistent shopping carts aren't just about what's in the shopping cart; they're about keeping the customer experience personalized from session to session. The key idea is that the customer experience is convenient. An effective shopping cart strategy will notify the customer if the item they previously abandoned is now out of stock, or being sold at a different price.

Make the cart a focus.

Display a consistent and enticing image of the selected shopping cart items along with a short description of the items throughout the user experience to overcome buyer hesitancy. This is particularly important if multiple users in one family log into your site, or you offer a multitude of products. Shoppers may also be using the cart more as a "wish list" feature. Help them make a purchase decision by reminding them of what they've selected.



Target makes the shopping cart prominent in their header and highlight the number of items in it. (target.com)

Remain persistent regardless of channel.

Retailers who have adopted a multichannel strategy must ensure that the same persistent shopping cart experience is maintained across all channels, in case a potential buyer revisits the site with a tablet, smartphone, or other device outside of a personal computer.

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A long buying cycle is now the norm.

Thanks to mobile technology and social media, consumers are accustomed to comparing prices and offers, researching products, and even receiving email alerts when a retailer drops the price on a product. Shopping cart abandonment is part of the buying process. Make sure that the "minimum expiration" on your shopping cart is set to at least 60 days.

Sound complicated? It isn't.

Many shopping cart providers offer advanced, persistent carts that support multichannel shopping and long expiration terms. Check out this list of persistent shopping carts.

one to watch
Victoriassecret.com

Not only does the site cache shopping cart items for all guests (not just those logged in or registered) it offers a "wish list" option that "remembers" merchandise for a user, without requiring that he or she adds it to the cart. When a low inventory item is placed in the cart or on the wish list, the user is notified. If the user abandons the transaction, the shopping cart remains intact at the next visit, without requiring login of any kind.

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principal #3

Task Switching

definition

The process by which a person swaps between two or more tasks according to a regular schedule.

This behavior has become intrinsic to life in 2013, but as an e-retailer, it is your enemy. In the name of "multi-tasking," online shoppers click and scurry about, browsing online, answering emails, checking text messages, fixing dinner, talking to their kids, doing chores…no wonder it's so hard to get them all the way through the checkout process. Your best solution to overcoming customer distraction? Stay top of mind and simplify the buying process.

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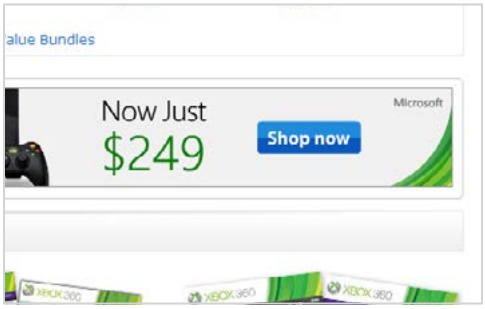
Remind shoppers of what they were doing.

Send emails with a clear and relevant headline. After a customer abandons his or her shopping cart, remind him or her of the items left behind. The first email should come immediately after the cart is abandoned with a subject line similar to "Did you mean to leave your ___ behind?" If that doesn't result in a conversion, wait a few days and send another email reminding him or her about the products still in the cart.

Retarget to reinitiate.

Retargeting has become a common word in the digital world that can refer to search and social media; it actually means targeting a customer or prospect based on something you already know about the person. By the time a customer abandons your shopping cart, he or she has given you an opportunity to learn quite a bit about him or her, including how much time he or she spends with a page or product, what else he or she looked at, and what site he or she came from. By presenting customers and prospects with relevant ads and messaging based on their previous behavior on your site, you can increase incremental revenue by up to 7%.



Walmart has ads within their content based on the user's recently viewed items. (walmart.com)

one to watch
BostonProper.com

Thanks to a well-developed retargeting strategy, BostonProper.com personalize its display advertising down to the colors and styles of the items previously viewed. Additionally, a persistent shopping cart retains items selected for several months, making sure that prospects have every opportunity to purchase them in the future.

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principal #4

Shiny Object Syndrome

definition

Capturing "the current big thing," while becoming distracted by chasing "the next big thing."

OK, so maybe this isn't a documented psychological principle, but its mastery can certainly be an asset to the e-marketer. Easily distracted consumers will gravitate toward whatever catches their eye first. It's only after they've landed on something that anxiety, dissonance, and other cart conversion killers kick in. Here are few ways to make a customer's wandering eye a sales advantage in e-commerce.

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Use suggestive selling.

In a brick and mortar store, a sales person might tell a customer how well an accessory complements the item he or she plans to buy. A physical storefront can also be merchandised so customers won't miss the higher margin items a retailer prioritizes. These techniques are also relevant in e-commerce. For example, you might show three or four recommended items that the customer can use to "accessorize" based on his or her online shopping behavior, or serve a targeted ad relevant to the customer's purchase as an add-on at checkout. Because the suggested items are complementary to what the customer is already interested in, the offers are not seen as distractions. What you're doing is keeping them engaged in the original transaction.

Amazon includes items often bought with the product the customer is viewing. This provides a great way to encourage the customer to buy more items. (www.amazon.com)

Merchandise the items you want to move.

Highlight unwanted inventory or the items you want to sell most with quality imagery, key placement, action-oriented colors, and persuasive language like "limited time offer." Make it easy and fast for customers to purchase by offering a buy button that is prominently displayed.

Create a "last chance" category.

Have a lot of items you want to push? Create a separate area in the site navigation for clearance items, and use design techniques that highlight the section appropriately that fall in line with your visual branding. Keep in mind that your ability to "lure" customers with such items has everything to do with consistency: if you brand the category as a deal, be aggressive in your pricing, show customers how much they'll save, and why they need to act now.

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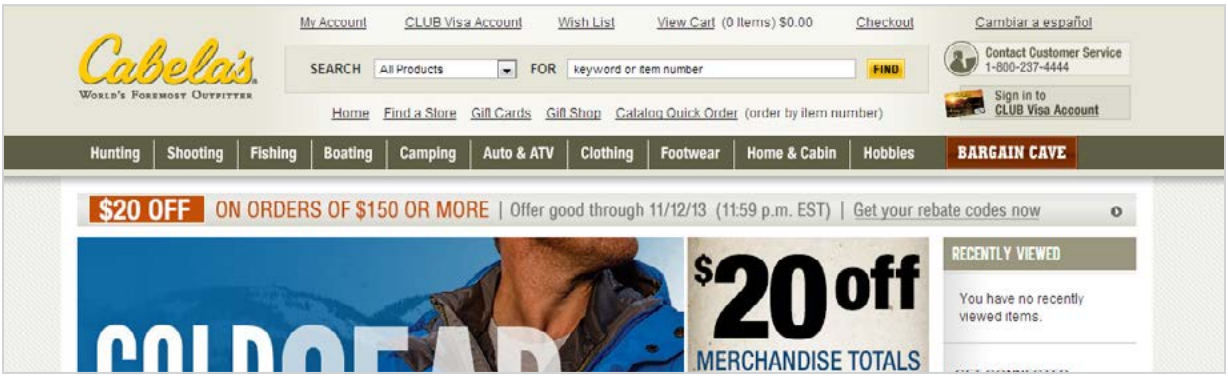
Take the clutter out of the checkout process.

Just as you can elicit a purchase through the shiny object syndrome, your customers also abandon their purchase journey as a result of it. Remove everything from the checkout process except what's absolutely necessary, including the navigation, ads, banners, etc. This will encourage the customer to flow through the process and complete it quickly.

one to watch
Cabelas.com

Mirroring their in-store layout, Cabela's features "last chance" buys in a designated area on its site called the Bargain Cave. Within the Bargain Cave, there are weekly specials, last-ditch deals, and featured items. Additionally, Cabela's uses the main banner throughout the site to highlight items it wants the customer to notice. Lastly, the checkout page is completely void of distractions, showing only the return and privacy policies, the customer service number, and necessary cart items (billing address, shipping addresses, payment method, etc.).



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principal #5

Anxiety

definition

A mood state characterized by worry and apprehension. Similar to the tension caused when an individual anticipates impending danger, catastrophe, or misfortune.

Federal Trade Commission data state that as many as ten million people have their identities stolen each year. Customers are wary about handing their personal information over to an unknown, possibly untrusted online source. Part of your responsibility as an online business is to make sure customer information is secure and protected during and after the transaction.

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Here are a few ways to relieve customer anxiety about online purchases:

Use familiar logos.

With 58% of users in an Econsultancy survey stating that "concerns about payment security" would deter them from completing an online purchase, it's important to reassure the customer and ensure that you've taken steps to guarantee a secure experience. Include security logos near the credit card fields, along with wording that reinforces your defenses, such as "Submit Your Secure Payment Here." If you are affiliated with other commerce sites, like Google Trusted Store, show those emblems too.

Share your privacy and security policy.

Make your privacy policy visible on your website, and offer a link to it at the bottom of your checkout page. It is important that customers know that you will not sell their demographic or behavioral data, store their credit card data without consent, or otherwise compromise their credit card information.

Show your credibility.

Reduce perceived risk in the mind of the customer by providing familiar reassurance throughout your website. Use standard language about your site using encrypted technology for the handling of private information and credit card data, and assure customers their information will not be stored or sold to a third party. Show the major credit card icons you accept as a form of payment; these will be familiar to customers. (A recent study by Javelin Strategy & Research found that when it comes to the perception of trust and privacy, customers are most influenced when a vendor shows a Visa logo compared to other payment methods, such as PayPal). Ensure that your website design, domain name, and email address convey professionalism. (If you have a Yahoo, AOL, or Gmail email address incorporating those company names, pay for an email address that matches your domain name).

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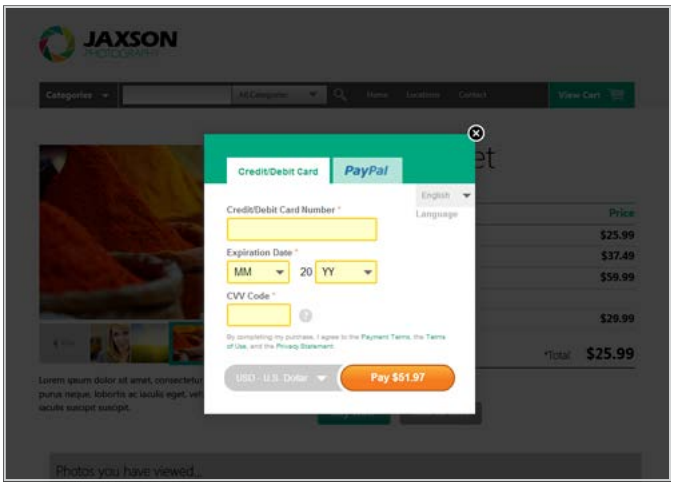
Keep the experience consistent.

If customers are taken to a payment processor's site behind the scenes at checkout, they shouldn't have to be concerned about it. When you select a payment processor, make sure the company is able to simulate your site throughout the transaction process for a streamlined customer experience that maintains the look and feel of your site with a vanity page. Also make sure the experience maintains a multichannel infrastructure and carries the look and feel of your website on desktop computers, tablets, and smartphones.



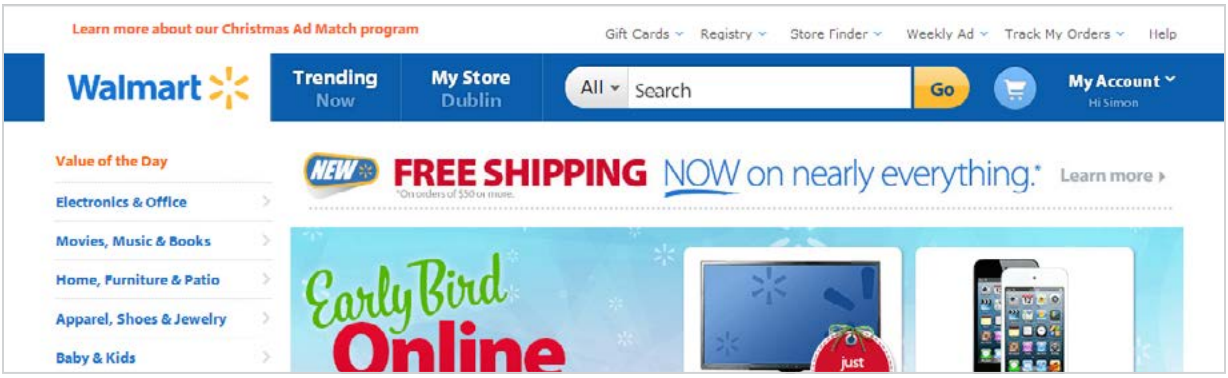
2Checkout's Direct Checkout option gives the customer the impression they never left the seller's site. The payment fields just popup over the seller's site.

Be 100% compliant with payment industry security standards.

By maintaining 100% PCI compliance, you and your customers can rest easy, knowing that their payment information will not be threatened. If you are not able to maintain full compliance on your own, select a payment processor who will maintain it for you.

one to watch
Walmart.com

In addition to notifying customers of secure payment with logos at checkout, the retailer addresses the issue of online security as part of its privacy policy page. They have a link for privacy and online safety tips for customers, as well as a link for reporting identity theft.



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Conclusion

We've shared a collection of principles and tips from psychology so you can refine your site to better meet the needs of your consumers in e-commerce.

Applying these principles and tips to your checkout experience can reduce shopping cart abandonment, increase average order size, build customer loyalty, and encourage repeat business. Try them and watch your sales numbers soar.

For more information on psychology and the shopping cart experience, get your copy of Part One of Turn Website Visitors into Buyers: 10 Psychological Principles Applied to Shopping Cart Conversion now!

Have questions about these principles and tips or want to share your experience with applying them?
Connect with us on Twitter, Facebook, or LinkedIn.

share

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Global payments made easy.

2Checkout is an online payment processing provider who helps thousands of online businesses sell around the world every day with dozens of international currencies, multiple languages, and a customizable checkout page.

Connect with 2Checkout and learn more about how our services can enable you to implement these principles.

Connect >>

about the author

Jenny Comisford

Jenny has spent the last 3 years engulfed in everything Marketing Automation. Previously an Eloqua user, she is now mastering Pardot as well. She has a passion for B2B Sales and Marketing Operations, all things automation and optimization, and the world of SaaS. Witnessing people work towards a common goal keeps her engaged and excited to come to work each day.

Hobbies include spending time with her husband and pups, walking, and dining out. Jenny received her BA in Communications from the University of New Orleans and her MA in Telecommunications, Information Studies and Media from Michigan State University.

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