Selling the product

Lesson 4.4.2 | Consumer psychology

Core ideas

Selling involves identifying customer needs, presenting relevant benefits and helping the customer decide whether the product fits.

Salespeople can influence consumers through expertise, friendliness, similarity, authority and trustworthiness.

Product demonstrations and trials can reduce uncertainty by making benefits easier to see or experience.

Persuasive selling should match features to the customer's goals rather than only pushing a product.

Pressure tactics such as scarcity, urgency or repeated prompting may increase short-term sales but can reduce trust or satisfaction.

Effective selling depends on product type, customer involvement, perceived risk, relationship quality and ethical communication.

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Key terms

Sales interaction: Communication between a seller and a customer during a buying situation.

Customer need: The problem, goal or desire the product may address.

Product benefit: A useful outcome or advantage the product offers.

Demonstration: Showing how a product works or what it can do.

Trial: A chance to use or test a product before buying.

Trustworthiness: The extent to which a seller seems honest and reliable.

Scarcity tactic: Suggesting limited availability to encourage quicker action.

Closing: The stage where the seller encourages a final decision or purchase.

Further detail and evidence

Customer-focused selling identifies needs and fits an offer to them. Competitor-focused selling contrasts alternatives. Product-focused selling stresses features and performance. A feature is useful only when linked to a benefit relevant to the customer.

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Continued

Disrupt-then-reframe briefly interrupts normal processing and then supplies a simple positive interpretation. Kardes et al. (2007) found that effectiveness depended on need for cognitive closure: confusion makes an easy resolution attractive, especially when a definite answer is desired.

Cialdini's six principles: reciprocity (return favours), commitment/consistency (act in line with prior commitments), social proof (follow others), liking (agree with liked people), authority (defer to credible expertise), and scarcity (value limited availability). Identify the mechanism behind the sales cue.

Applying the ideas

A free sample can invite reciprocity; "most popular" uses social proof; a credible expert uses authority; a limited quantity uses scarcity. A small initial commitment can encourage consistent later action. These cues predict tendencies and do not guarantee that a person will buy.

Evaluation and connections

A field sale provides actual behaviour but may combine several cues. Experiments should isolate the target principle and avoid misleading participants. Need for closure illustrates individual differences; time pressure and confusing presentation are situational influences. Ethical usefulness includes truthful claims and meaningful consumer choice.