

Verbal and nonverbal communication in retail



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Verbal and Non-Verbal Communication

All around the various environments/ settings that man lives in, there is always some form of communication that takes place, whether verbal or non-verbal communication. Most of the communication that happens with man is often conveyed through non-verbal means. The non-verbal communication may happen both consciously and non-consciously. This paper seeks to give an analysis of a social setting - in this case, a shopping mall - and give an application of the various communication concepts in relation to this setting.

There are many reasons as to why people decide to take trips down to the shopping malls. Perhaps they could be going to do some actual shopping or window-shopping, to relax/ meet someone, watch a movie, access the internet, and have a cup of coffee or a meal, among other reasons. At times people walk into the shopping malls as individuals or in groups. As they go about doing their own businesses, they communicate in various ways. For example, an individual may walk into the goods bay and begin walking around the shelves. The pace of walking in itself communicates a certain message. For instance, based on the kinesics theory, if the person is walking hurriedly and pacing back and forth among the shelves, especially in the same area, one may easily conclude that the person is either confused or in a hurry to escape from something or someone. At this point, if there are shopping attendants in the goods bay, they may approach the person and try conversing. In relation to the adjacency pairs concept, the shopping attendant may begin a conversation with words like, " Sir, may I help you?" The response the individual is expected to give may be similar to, " Yes,

please. Could you please show me where I can find product X?" In this case, product X could be a particular detergent, shaving cream, electronic equipment, and so on. If a response that may sound to be rude, disrespectful, or harsh is given, then the shopping attendant may try to want to know more in order to identify the problem or seek assistance from somewhere else. In this scenario, customer service and public relations may be necessary. The two techniques may come in handy to resolve the situation.

At times, a person may walk into the shopping mall and may just take their time moving around the shelves. They may seem to pick up things off the shelves but then return them. At times, they may be seen to compare two items as they talk to themselves. In such instances, in relation to kinesics concept, the person may appear to be undecided and does not know the choice to make. Perhaps, the person could be doing a mental budget by comparing the products picked, or they may just not know what to pick. Sometimes, people go to purchase products that they are not familiar with at all. In such cases, the person doing the shopping may befriend another shopper and solicit for advice. In the process, they may actually converse and show curtsies and smiles. Different people may actually interpret this act differently. Some may see it to be a friendly and relaxed looking environment. As the people who have just met continue to talk and laugh, it may signify socializing and friendly society. Other people may think that the two people may have known one another for ages and are just catching up. To some, they may think that the two people are just drawing unnecessary attention.

Some buyers as they do their shopping some go picking anything from the shelves and in large quantities. Some pick a variety of one product, e. g. different types of a particular brand of soap or lotion. Some do not even care to look at the product prices. However, others have to compare the prices carefully before making up their minds on what to buy. These contrasting behaviors show that different buyers have different purchasing capabilities. For instance, when a parent walks into the shopping mall with their child, the child may want something that was outside the budget. Some parents may choose to buy the child what they have asked without thinking twice while others will have to convince their children that it is not possible to buy them what they want. According to the proxemics concept, this behavior shows that different people have different purchasing power. When a shopper buys a variety of things, they are even treated differently by the shopping attendants and cashiers as well. For instance, they may be offered a mall attendant to help them carry the goods to their car, they may be given discounts, or they may be offered some preferential treatment like being offered extra items at no extra cost. There are also people who purchase goods without having to come to the shopping mall and have the goods delivered at their doorstep at an extra cost. Some people do not have trouble paying for the extra cost of transport delivery while others have to consider their options. Regular customers are also treated in a special way that seems to appreciate them. However, those who exhibit high purchasing power and do not necessarily fall to the category of regular customers are always treated in a nice way compared to others. They may even be taken to the front line, skipping other shoppers waiting to be served. This underscores

the fact that the elite in society will always have their way as they please.

The inequalities that exist in society are also evident through such gestures.

At the cashier counters, there are those who pay cash while others pay using credit or debit cards. Those who have electronic payment cards may at times be in possession of more than one card. The communication here is that in society, there are the 'haves' and 'have nots'. There are those with plenty and spend with ease as they can afford whatever they want. Others have even to negotiate at the counter as they pay and may even end up not paying for everything that they picked from the shelves. All these help in explaining the concept of proxemics. In addition, some clients may experience problems with their credit cards. This scenario at times may lead to the involvement of the managers. In such cases, the customer may converse with the manager and want to find out why they cannot purchase anything yet they may have the funds. In such instances, the transmission model of communication is applicable. This is because the manager may involve the bank of the client or access the personal details of the client under authorization from relevant authorities. However, encoding and decoding of the messages may lead to too much bureaucracy that wastes time for the client even when there is no major issue.

Shopping malls are at times social meeting points. People who know each other may bump into one another in the malls or may arrange to meet there.

When they meet, there may be the excitement of meeting as they greet one another. In the process of greetings, they may either hug or shake hands.

This scenario best explains the speech act concept. The two parties express their greetings in action form through hugging or shaking hands. When they

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are even saying goodbyes in the shopping malls, they may kiss or show some signal to the public. However, the danger with sign language is that not all symbols/ signs are standard across various localities. One friendly gesture in a certain locality may be an offense in another locality. The same case applies to certain words used in the public. There are words in certain cultures that are not offensive while in other cultures they are highly offensive. For this reason, extra caution should be taken when speech acting. The challenge however is that most of the time, people speech act at times unconsciously. They may not even consider to have made an offense.

One important communication concept that marketers in shopping malls use is the looking-glass self. Whenever a customer goes to buy or just wants to try a product, the marketers may give pleasant comments to the potential buyer in a bid to sell the product. For example, when one wants to buy clothes, they may go window-shopping and in the process try them out to see how they look in them. The marketers often take advantage of these situations to give compliments to the potential buyer. The nice or positive compliments regarding the cloth in relation to the potential buyer play around with the psychology of the potential buyer. As a result, the potential buyer's self-esteem may be boosted and the compliments may play a major role in influencing the decision to buy. Even if the potential buyer may not have money now to buy the product, they may go and come back later to purchase the item after a while. When clients are made to look good and are motivated to buy, they will buy even if they did not intend to buy a given product. The sales promotion personnel should learn to utilize the looking-glass self concept in ensuring that they sell their products/ services. The

provision of demos goes a long way in further convincing the potential buyer and influences their decision to buy greatly. Well-presented demos or promotions capture the attention of potential buyers. At the same time, the promotions and demos influence the perceptions of how the potential buyer thinks the sales promoter views them, consequently affecting decision to buy in a number of potential buyers.

In conclusion, verbal and non-verbal communication often takes place concurrently. However, the majority of the communication is what happens non-verbally. Learning how to interpret different messages as they are communicated is the most important thing in interpersonal communications. The person who learns to decode messages, especially non-verbal messages, always knows how to relate with other people in society effectively. Clarity especially in verbal is important. This is because if the message is not properly encoded for the intended recipient to decode appropriately as intended, then meaning will have been lost. Hence, elaborations in verbal communications are extremely importance for clarity purposes and ease of understanding.