



Anthropologie: An Analysis of Successful Selling Strategies and How It Affects Buyers At Anthropologie Boutiques

Jenn Steinhardt



Grandma and I pulled into the Hyde Park parking deck and anxiously walked down to the shopping center. The Tampa heat was a little unpleasant, but I was in good company. Besides, there was nothing I loved more than outside shopping malls, organic restaurants, unique coffee shops and beautiful boutiques.

We sat down at my first smoothie bar, and started to plan our excursion only to decide we'd start at these doors and wander aimlessly. She and I caught up on nearly a years worth of everyday nothings, while we people watched. At one point I looked past the people and noticed a store across the street. The front was wooden, offset from the other shops. In the square, glass windows we saw intricate fabrics with detailed designs.

“Can we go there first?” I requested. As always, Grandma corrected my grammar, but then, after seeing the storefront, agreed.

Ivory lettering told us this was Anthropologie. Upon our approach we became increasingly excited. Being the artsy-fartsy girl that I was, and my grandma being the cultured woman who inspired me to be the way I m, we drooled at the sight of this newly found store. We'd never seen anything like it.

Allbusiness.com best described the first steps into the store: “As you cross the threshold, the ceiling opens up and the back of the store is miles away, which creates a visual feast. The old adage ‘how do you eat an elephant?’ is the only way to tackle the store – One bite at a time.”

Ahead of me, I saw some elaborate jewelry, then to my left was house ware. Orange and yellow swirled patterns covered throw pillows, while other multi-colored stitches decorate couches and bedding. In a tall, tri-level bin, are doorknobs and kitchenware designed with a chic palette, unlike anything I could have ever imagined. To my right were racks and racks of clothes. I saw a display that I liked halfway back in the store, so I worked my way towards that. The price tags disturbed my thin wallet, but just looking at the fabrics brought on such inspiration and I certainly couldn't look away.

Every time I visited Grandma in Tampa, we'd make the pilgrimage to Hyde Park and investigate the new designs and displays in Anthropologie. After a few years of working in retail and a few in advertising, media and rhetoric classes, I've developed a further love for the boutique-styled shop. However, this interest is not only made at the sight of Anthropologie products, but also at the thought of their marketing and business strategy. What makes them so unique is that these two aspects are actually one and the same.



B3designer.co.uk says, “Anthropologie, derived from the word ‘Anthropology,’ which means the study of the human being and how we all differ from one another, has an interior and products that reflect its name’s meaning.” The writer continues, “Exploration, individuality, and differentiation weave their way through the Anthropologie boutique, making it a truly inspirational place.”

One way that Anthropologie aims to achieve such inspiration is through its demographic choice, or “psychographic terms” as Anthropologie president, Glen Shek, prefers to use. Shek describes her customers as:

She’s well-read and well-traveled. She is aware – she gets our references, whether it’s to a town in Europe or to a book or movie. She’s urban minded. She’s into cooking, gardening, and wine. She has a natural curiosity about the world. She’s relatively fit.

While it’s not unusual for a company to know and cater to their target market, it is unique (and it shows in the interior design and products) that Anthropologie really

“specializes in one customer.” Shek describes the relationship between the company and the customer as a friendship. When you walk into Anthropologie, you feel like you’re walking into your chic, best friend’s house – “Mi Casa su casa.” In addition, the company doesn’t spend money on traditional advertising, but rather spends money on creating an “experience,” and they “invest in execution.”

By winning the Interior Design Best of Year Award, Anthropologie has proved it has created a brand image unlike any other. The experience is designed through theme, color, layout and elaborate displays. According to Broudy, author of Designing to Sell, “The store’s design is the largest single in-store investment that the merchant will make to simulate sales and contribute to the profitability of the merchandise...Remodeling a store should bring a 20-30 percent increase in sales that should be maintained.” In 2009, Anthropologie increased their numbers by twenty-one percent.

Broudy suggests there are five components that motivate a customer to buy: perceived value, price, design, ambience, merchandise presentation. All the way from the smoothie bar, Grandma and I recognized that Anthropologie was something different. The wood paneling on the outside, clever displays in the windows, and the attention to detail and its quality all contributed to the perceived quality of the store. The shop next store aligned with the others, maybe their display was interesting, but this shop looked really different and high quality. Everything was in place, and put together.

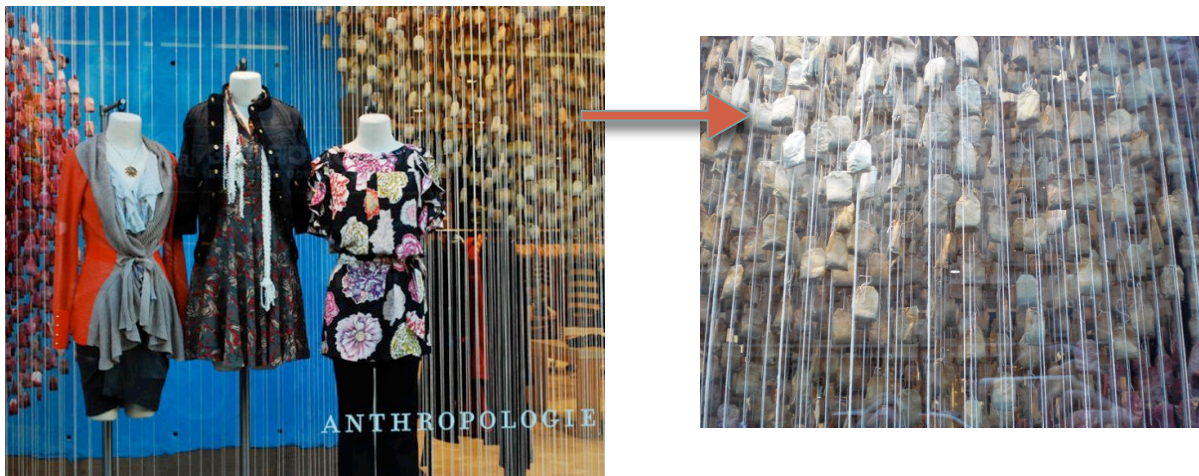
Anthropologie’s pricing plan, however was rather discouraging. With prices ranging from around \$20 for a shirt on the clearance rack to over \$180 for a dress in the front of the shop, it’s evident that this store was not cheap. The price tags tell customers that the material is going to last and it’s worth it. The target customer is in there 30’s

(give or take), so they likely can afford to spend a little on themselves. The younger generation is shopping on the clearance rack or not buying at all because they can't afford it. Because Anthropologie's products are quality, the pricing plan doesn't necessarily say, "Get out!" It says, "Get a job and save up."



The next components of buying behavior are complicated to separate. Allbusiness.com praises Anthropologie's design and says, "You find dozens of nooks and crannies filled with merchandise...it's so interesting, you check it all out. And then you go back and discover things you didn't see the first time around." In the picture on the left, you can see that this room is an offset of the main store layout. In the background, there are displays and other walls, probably leading to another selling area. In this particular set-up, is the home decoration area. A colorful couch sits before coffee table, filled with just enough products to please your eyes. This homey feel draws you in and makes you feel as if you've walked into an entirely different house or room. It's an escape.

Another example of the escape feeling can be seen to the right. The bed is literally in it's own room, with a wall and a small opening dividing it from another area. Had the photographer not left space from the opening on the very left, the viewer would never have known this was a showcase in an actual store. Everything in that room is on sale, and the arrangement of the individual room shows how you might put together a room of your own. This entices buyers even more, as opposed to just seeing some sheets, pillows, maybe a bed frame thrown together with other bed sets and what not. Allbusiness.com elaborates on its opinion of this floor plan by saying it's beneficial to "disrupt flow and create a sense of discovery."



Anthropologie creates ambience in numerous ways, from references to children's stories, to London displays, and to a window filled with apparently used tea bags. The image to the left is the full image, and the image to the right shows a close-up of the non-colored teabags. B3designers.co.uk says, "The tea bags, which appeared to be used, created a sense of wonder at the potential of everyday objects and how they fill our lives...It is cerebral and instantly take their viewers on a journey; how many tea bags do

we use everyday? How many thoughts and ideas did these tea bags assist with in their own little way?”



On the inside of the store, displays are created by a theme or sometimes by the products themselves. In the image to the left, this store chose a giant hanging sea creature. It looms over the customers, but it's natural coloring and the non-threatening tones with the furniture and the merchandise allows this whale-like guide to be a friend. It, again, takes on a journey. Then in the image below the whale, we see a display inspired by the clothing itself. The white dresses and the dangling jars create a feeling of comfort and innocence. Look closely, and you'll see that these are the type of jars you used when you were a kid to catch lightning bugs in the



summer time. When my Grandma lived on a farm in New Jersey, my cousins and I would go out every night to fill these jars. Now those same jars hang from the ceiling with light bulbs shaped like a candle flame. The warm colors on the walls brighten the room, making you feel more at ease.

Shek says that in 2003, Anthropologie implemented a new design theme. She explains that there are “happy clothes” and there are “sad clothes.” She continues, “Our customer wants happy clothes,” which are “colorful, pretty, and feminine. Sad clothes,

by contrast, tend to come in darker colors and have sharp, edgy shapes.” The colors seen in the displays and on the walls illustrate this happy-clothes concept. They are welcoming and friendly.

Overall, Anthropologie accomplishes Broudy’s expectations. It’s a successful store, and truly captures the hearts and wallets of the well-read and well-traveled woman of the United States and now in Europe.

