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## How People Select and Purchase Greeting Cards, Evaluated By Means of the One-Way-Mirror Technique

Herman F. Brandt  
*Drake University*

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# How People Select and Purchase Greeting Cards, Evaluated By Means of the One-Way-Mirror Technique

HERMAN F. BRANDT

The purpose of this study was to discover by means of the one-way mirror technique how people select and purchase greeting cards. To discover the buying habits of customers was the major objective throughout the respective studies. It was an attempt to answer questions such as:

1. How much time does the average customer spend in selecting and purchasing the card or cards of his choice.
2. How much time does he devote to picking up cards and reading the sentiments.
3. How many cards does the average buyer pick up.
4. How many cards are purchased by the average customer.
5. What are some general characteristics of the buyer.

## METHOD AND PROCEDURE

Booths equipped with a one-way-mirror were constructed and located on the balcony of a department and a stationery store. Stationed in each of these booths was a trained observer equipped with an electric counter to record the buying habits of customers as they purchased cards in the stores. Customers selected were clocked from the time they entered the station to select the card until they had purchased their card or cards or would leave to go elsewhere. Customers at no time were aware of the fact that they were observed.

Each card in the station had a numerical position and identification and sufficient stock were provided so that cards nearly depleted were replenished accordingly. Then, too, whenever cards were displaced by customers they were returned to their rightful place by the clerk in charge.

Four types of greeting cards were displayed in different seasons and 200 customers were checked as they purchased different types of cards at the respective stations.

The first study was made with Father's Day Cards. Two stations were stocked with a total of 265 Father's day greeting cards, 130 in station A and 135 in station B.

## RESULTS

Table I

### *Father's Day Cards*

Average time spent in selecting cards.....	3.75 min.
Average time picking up cards and reading sentiments.....	1.58 min.
Number of cards picked up.....	8.40
Number of cards purchased.....	1.20
Number of cards displayed.....	265

Study number two was made with 237 Easter greeting cards displayed in station A with 123 cards and station B with 114 cards.

Table II

*Easter Greeting Cards*

Average time spent in selecting cards.....	3.04 min.
Average time picking up cards and reading sentiments.....	.93 min.
Number of cards picked up.....	4.43
Number of cards purchased.....	2.29
Number of cards displayed.....	237

The third study was conducted with a total of 56 general greeting cards displayed in a single station.

Table III

*General Greeting Cards*

Average time spent in selecting cards.....	3.02 min.
Average time picking up cards and reading sentiments.....	1.74 min.
Number of cards picked up.....	7.12
Number of cards purchased.....	1.26
Number of cards displayed.....	56

Study number four was carried on with a station stocked with 85 birthday greeting cards.

Table IV

*Birthday Greeting Cards*

Average time spent in selecting cards.....	1.33 min.
Average time picking up cards and reading sentiments.....	1.11 min.
Number of cards picked up.....	5.11
Number of cards purchased.....	.80
Number of cards displayed.....	85

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

It is apparent from Tables I, II, III and IV that most time was spent in selecting a father's day card and more cards were picked up than in any of the other studies. However, the number of cards purchased was only 1.20 cards for every 8.40 cards picked up as compared to 4.43 Easter cards picked up for every 2.29 cards purchased.

It seems natural that customers would purchase more Easter greeting cards than cards intended for customers would purchase more Easter greeting cards than cards intended for Father's day. Some customers have two fathers as in the cases of married people; others would have only one. Some cards were picked up many times but seldom purchased while other cards were picked up less frequently but purchased in most cases. Some cards were neither picked up nor purchased. This is similar to some girls being frequently courted but never married or infrequently courted but soon married.

Table V

*Relative time Spent, Number of Greeting Cards Picked Up and Purchased by (800) Customers (200 for each type of card)*

Type of Card	Average Time Selecting Cards	Average Time Picking Up Cards	Number of Cards Picked Up	Number of Cards Purchased	Number of Cards Displayed
Father's day .....	3.75	1.58	8.40	1.20	265
Easter .....	3.04	.93	4.43	2.29	237
General ....	3.02	1.74	7.12	1.26	56
Birthday	1.33	1.11	5.11	.80	85

The location of the card in the station is an important factor in the response of the customer to the card. Cards located in the center of the station have a definite advantage over those displayed on either side.

Certain cards are picked up readily but after the customer reads the sentiment he returns the card to its rightful place.

In computing the relative number of excursions following the first card picked, it was discovered that more excursions were made in the upward direction and more movements were made horizontally than vertically. The horizontal or vertical excursions from one card to the next were generally short while the longer ones were as a rule diagonal.

Certain customers examine many cards and pick relatively few if any, while others pick up few cards but purchase a relatively high number. This may or may not be a definite personality trait of the customer.

Based upon the findings in this study it would appear that as a rule too many cards are displayed hence causing much confusion, and a loss of time in making the proper selection. A subsequent study will show how the cards most likely to be purchased displayed, will sell as compared to the same cards displayed with all the other cards rarely purchased.

In any case only by understanding the nature of human nature will we be able to manufacture the right type of cards and display them to the best of their advantage.

DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY,  
DRAKE UNIVERSITY.