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Categorization of customers by retail salespeople

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Abstract

Retailers should be interested in the way their salespeople categorize customers. Salespeople's descriptions of customer categories contain information about the nature of customers and how salespeople sell to customers. Customer category information can be used by retailers to aid in their selling, positioning, and promotion efforts. Using a survey of 229 salespeople from a department store chain, this paper examines two specific issues. First, we examine salespeople's descriptions of the categories of customers that visit a department store. Second, we delineate the differences among salespeople based on the manner in which they classify customers. The results indicate salespeople primarily list customers that visit the store as those who seek sales assistance and those who are searching for specific products. Additionally, three salespeople clusters with distinct categorization styles emerged from the analysis: *need based categorizers*, *decision styles categorizers* and *training based categorizers*. Implications of these findings and directions for retailers are also discussed.

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