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Tapescript – Liz

Um, well, I've been reading this article about e-tailing which, I believe, is referring to shopping online which is obviously an increasingly popular pastime.

Well, the general message is that it's not overly successful in a lot of cases because it's actually quite difficult to get customers to buy things from you online because, like with regular shopping, I guess, a lot of people are just window-shoppers so they're just looking for something to entertain themselves with, spend a few minutes just browsing online. So a lot of people visit these websites to, um, look at the products but very few actually buy them and, urgh, one of the statistics, I think, was that less than 5% of people visiting certain websites actually buy something.

Well, they've been investigating different ways to improve this situation and some of them sound quite interesting. So they've calculated that apparently many more sales are made when people have actual human contact. Obviously this is quite difficult through a computer screen but what they've done in this situation is they have people available via the company to talk to you via a live web chat. So if it looks like you're having difficulty deciding on your purchase there could be someone there to advise you. I don't know if this would be overly successful because some people don't really like being bothered when they're trying to shop but for other people it might help them make a decision.

Oh, I mean, I always prefer to talk to a real person myself. If I've got something that I need explained to me, I can't always trust my own understanding of the written word on a computer screen so I'd like to have a real person explain it to me. The most frustrating thing is this usually entails a very long phone call with a lot of waiting on hold, listening to some very bad music, having to press one about five times in a row. And eventually you get through to someone who, of course, doesn't really know who you are or what your needs are and they usually want to get you off the phone quite quickly. So, yeah, it's quite a frustrating



thing but I always prefer to be able to be in phone contact with someone rather than just through email or looking at computer screens.

I think people still, especially in this country, view shopping as a real sort of hobby. People enjoy getting in the car, driving to the shopping mall, getting out of the car, walking around the shops. And, I think, looking at pictures on screen can never compare to actually seeing the products in real life – being able to pick things up and touch them and, you know, try things on if you're looking at clothes, try things out if you're looking at gadgets. I think this would never be replaced by shopping entirely online.

The only things I buy online would be, I would say, things like books and CDs and things like that but even then, even though I know it's cheaper to buy online, I still prefer to go to an actual bookshop, pick up a book in my own hands and buy it. So, yeah, I'd say that I don't shop that often online.

To be honest, I don't really worry about that kind of thing anymore about, you know, credit card security, because I, I think in this day and age things are advanced enough that the security on these sites must be pretty good so I don't really worry about that kind of thing anymore. You stand just as much, if not more, chance of being ripped off just by using your card in a shop so, you know, you do just have to take these chances really.

Well, I mean, the interesting thing for me was about how obviously the human contact element is quite important and what some websites are doing, when they don't have the opportunity to have a real live person communicate with you, is instead they have little animations of, um, you know, sales people, of people to help you and apparently this does actually improve sales because people, even if it's not a real person communicating with them, people still prefer some kind of interaction and some kind of happy smiling figure to direct them towards the till.

Yeah, I think she's supposed to be some kind of trustworthy sales person, type of woman, but, um, I don't know if she would persuade me to buy a product I was dithering about to be honest.