

Gregory Stone surveyed whether they preferred large chains to independent merchants and then asked what specifically drew them to one type of shopping experience over another. Based on their answers, Stone conceived four “types” of shoppers. One category, “personalizing,” looked for stores that were warm and friendly, where they knew the sales staff and felt at home. They were quite different from the three other types: “economic” shoppers, who sought value and expedience over everything else, “ethical” shoppers, who were champions of mom-and-pop stores, and “apathetic” types, who shopped wherever they happened to be. Stone maintained that the personalizing shopper refuted the then popular notion that city dwellers didn’t forge meaningful social ties. On the contrary, this was a woman who developed, and even sought out, “quasi-primary relationships”—consequential strangers—with “strong personal attachments . . . often approaching intimacy.” It was her way of making the city less alien. Such a shopper would drive clear across town to frequent a store where she felt “known.”¹⁹ Fifty-five years later, although the marketplace has changed—among other reasons, because so many little guys have been driven out by giant retailers—Stone’s four categories still ring true. And it is the *personalizing* experience that makes us come back for more.

