

Buyology: Truth and Lies About Why We Buy by Martin Lindstrom

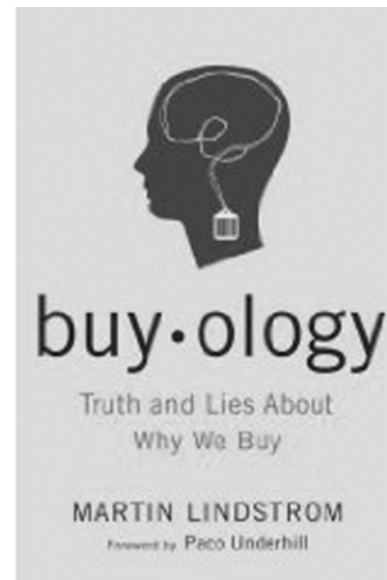
Reviewed by Jacqueline Eastman

Biography: Dr. Jacqueline Eastman is an Associate Professor of Marketing in Georgia Southern University's College of Business Administration. Her teaching interests are Marketing Research, Strategic Marketing Management, and Consumer Behavior. Her research interests are in scale development, ethics, Internet strategy, and web-based teaching. Dr. Eastman can be reached at jeastman@georgiasouthern.edu.

Martin Lindstrom, author of *Buyology: Truth and Lies about Why We Buy*, describes Buyology as the "subconscious thoughts, feelings, and desires that drive the purchasing decisions we make each and every day of our lives (page 3)." Businesses are utilizing neuromarketing to better understand how consumers react to their ads and products. With the tool of neuromarketing, businesses are learning why consumers do something, even if consumers can't explain it or understand it themselves. The vast majority of consumers' buying decisions are not conscious as people are not aware of the decisions they are making. Thus, by asking consumers why they buy what they do, researchers are only tapping into a small portion of the mental processes that underlie decision making. Thus, to better understand why we buy, researchers are examining the unconscious mind with the use of fMRI (functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging) and SST (steady state typography which is an advanced version of the electroencephalograph). This book describes this science so consumers can better understand it and recognize the tools that businesses are using to develop and promote products to them.

In *Buyology*, Lindstrom describes his three year, multi-million dollar study into the minds of consumers. From his study, there are several interesting findings. One finding is that cigarette warning labels not only fail to deter smoking, but actually activates the portion of the brain that encourages smokers to light up. Additionally, sex in advertising can interfere with ad effectiveness as it blinds people to the information contained in the ad, even the brand name advertised. Likewise the use of celebrities and humor can also distract consumers from what the ad is trying to communicate. Controversy and shock value is more memorable than sex and may be more effective in promoting a brand. Finally fear exerts a powerful effect on the brain, particularly in terms of the insecurities people have about themselves, and can be one of the most persuasive and memorable forms of advertising. These are just a few of the book's findings.

There are eleven chapters in the book that describe a wide variety of studies. These studies looked at everything from the Pepsi Challenge, to product placement on American Idol, to the use of subliminal advertising, to humans' need for rituals, and the powerful reaction in the brain to strong brands. What these studies and others like them in the book illustrate is that most of the brain's activities are dominated by automatic processes rather than deliberate thinking. A lot of what happens in the brain is emotional not rational. For marketers trying to reach consumers in an ever more stimulated, stressful



The Cover Story

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environment, they need to recognize the need to develop emotional connections to their brand and utilize sensory branding.

While it was interesting to read the different studies, more details on the studies conducted as well as their managerial implications would have improved the book. The conclusion could have been enhanced with more suggestions for how businesses could more effectively reach their consumers as well as more suggestions for consumers on how they can make better purchase decisions. Thus, while Lindstrom's *Buyology* was an interesting read, it left this reader wanting a little more.

Time to Read: Eight to ten hours

Why Should I read this book: If you ever wondered if anti-smoking ads work, does sex sell, and why organizations use fear appeals, this book provides insights into why these and other techniques either work or fail through discussing the science of neuromarketing.

Overall Rating: Two bulbs