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BUY•OLOGY

Truth and Lies About Why We Buy

THE SUMMARY IN BRIEF

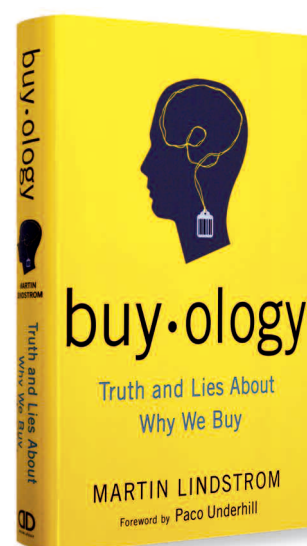
Global marketing research expert Martin Lindstrom presents the findings from his groundbreaking, three-year, \$7 million neuromarketing study. Neuromarketing is an emerging area of market research that represents a confluence of medical knowledge about the brain and how it works, technology and marketing.

Lindstrom's cutting-edge experiment peered inside the "gray matter" of 2,000 volunteers from all around the world as they encountered various ads, logos, commercials, brands and products — unlocking the subconscious thoughts, feelings and desires that prompt the purchasing decisions we make every day.

Lindstrom's underlying premise is that what consumers say they do and what they actually do are quite different — and the best way to get to the truth is by using neuromarketing. *Buyology's* blend of marketing and neuroscience, in pursuit of consumer truth, shatters much of what we have long believed about what captures our interest and drives us to buy.

IN THIS SUMMARY, YOU WILL LEARN:

- The breakthrough technology that maps the inner workings of the brain and how it can benefit both marketers and consumers.
- The unanticipated effect that disclaimers and health warnings actually have on behavior, as well as the scope and impact of subliminal advertising.
- How our buying behavior is affected by the world's major religions.
- If and how product placement really works.
- Whether or not sex in advertising actually works (hint: the answer is not what you might think).



by Martin Lindstrom

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THE COMPLETE SUMMARY: BUY•OLOGY

by Martin Lindstrom

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A Rush of Blood to the Head: Intro to Neuromarketing

If marketers and advertisers could uncover what is going on in our brains that makes us choose one brand over another — that would be a crucial key to building brands of the future. Enter neuromarketing, an intriguing marriage of marketing and science.

Neuromarketing is simply a tool that can help decode what we as consumers are already thinking about when confronted with a product or brand. The more companies know about our subconscious needs and desires, the more useful, meaningful products they will bring to market. That's the promise this technology holds for consumers and producers alike.

Imagine more products that earn more money and satisfy more consumers at the same time. That's a nice combo.

Neuromarketing: Technology That Maps the Brain

There are relatively few brain-scanning technologies that are widely used today. One such technology that Lindstrom enlisted for his three-year study was functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI), which measures the magnetic properties of hemoglobin, the components in red blood cells that carry oxygen throughout the body.

When the brain is operating on a specific task, it demands more fuel — mainly oxygen and glucose. So the harder a region of the brain is working, the greater

the fuel consumption and the greater the flow of oxygenated blood will be to that site. During an fMRI scan, when a portion of the brain is in use, that region will light up like a red-hot flare on the screen. By tracking this activation, neuroscientists can determine what specific areas in the brain are working at any given time.

A companion technology used in the study is called steady-state typography (SST), which tracks rapid brain waves in real time by measuring electrical activity inside the brain. According to Lindstrom, brain waves calibrated by fMRI and SST are straight shooters. When a person is connected to one of these machines and asked questions, his or her brain waves and patterns don't waver, hold back, equivocate or say what they think the person across the table wants to hear.

Both fMRI and SST are able to measure the level of emotional attraction (or revulsion) we experience in response to stimuli more precisely than any other tool available. As such, neuroimaging could uncover truths that a half-century of market research, focus groups and opinion polling couldn't come close to accomplishing.

The Need for Neuromarketing

According to Lindstrom, the aforementioned traditional research methods are no longer up to the task of finding out what consumers really think. However, such consumer insight is critically important in light of the following facts:

- Roughly 21,000 new brands are introduced worldwide each year — and most fail within 12 months.
- Eight out of 10 products launched in the United States



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Rebecca S. Clement, Publisher; Sarah T. Dayton, Editor in Chief; Andrew Clancy, Senior Editor; Edward O'Neill, Graphic Designer; Tor Constantino, Contributing Editor

fail within three months.

- In consumer products alone, 52 percent of all new brands and 75 percent of individual products fail.

Neuromarketing: Real-World Examples

Reducing these failure rates and their costs is a key reason driving the application of neuroimaging in some unexpected ways, such as the following:

- Hollywood is using neuroscience to study how subjects' brains respond to trailers of movies that are months away from general release. By exploring precisely what appeals to the brain's reward center, studios can create more provocative trailers, or even revise movie endings to reflect what appeals to the viewing public.
- Daimler-Chrysler used fMRIs to study people's brains while showing them images of automobiles, including Mini Coopers. They found that with the Mini Cooper image, a region in the back of the brain that responds to faces came alive, showing that the Mini Cooper registered in subjects' heads as an adorable face — a Bambi on four wheels, if you will. ●

This Must Be the Place: Product Placement

Over the years, neuromarketing research has found that consumers' memory of a product is the most relevant, reliable measure of an ad's effectiveness and their future buying behavior. One of the fastest growing ways to try to reinforce brands in customers' memories is by using product placement within media content.

According to a study conducted by PQ Media in 2006, companies paid a total of \$3.36 billion globally to have products featured in various TV shows, music videos and movies. In 2007, this increased to \$4.38 billion, and it is predicted to reach \$7.6 billion by 2010.

To gauge the effectiveness of product placement, neuromarketing researchers turned their spotlight on the hit TV talent show for aspiring singers, "American Idol."

'American Idol': \$26 Million Gamble

There are three primary corporate sponsors on "American Idol": Cingular Wireless, Ford Motor Company and Coca-Cola, each of which forks over an estimated \$26 million annually to have its brands featured on one of the highest-rated shows in television history.

Not only do Coke and Cingular run 30-second ads during commercial breaks as part of that spend, they also feature their products prominently *during* the show itself.

Cigarette Warning Labels: More Harm Than Good?

Virtually every country requires some kind of health warning label on cigarette packages. These range from written U.S. warnings to gory, forensically true-to-life images of lung tumors, depicted in countries such as Thailand, Australia and Brazil.

In 2006, despite these warnings, tobacco advertising bans and massive anti-smoking campaigns, global consumers smoked a whopping 5.763 trillion cigarettes. Lindstrom's neuromarketing study revealed surprising results about what drives smokers' cravings.

Smokers in the study had to first answer written questions about a variety of behaviors, including whether they were affected by warnings on cigarette packs and whether those warnings made them smoke less.

Participants were then connected to an fMRI machine, where their brains were mapped while viewing slides of various warning labels and simultaneously clicking a device gauging their desire to smoke.

Researchers found that viewing the various cigarette warning labels actually stimulated an area of the smokers' brains called the nucleus accumbens, otherwise known as the "craving spot." This region is a chain-link of specialized neurons that lights up when the body desires something — whether alcohol, drugs, tobacco, sex or gambling.

Even though most of the participants checked "yes" on the pretest when asked if warning labels worked, these fMRI results showed that not only did cigarette warning labels fail to deter smoking, but by activating the "craving spot," it appeared they actually encouraged smokers to light up.

For instance, the three judges all keep cups of America's most popular soft drink in front of them, and both the judges and the contestants sit on chairs or couches with rounded contours specifically designed to look like bottles of Coca-Cola.

Cingular pops up repeatedly throughout the show, though to a lesser extent. As host, Ryan Seacrest repeatedly reminds viewers to dial in or vote for their favorite contestant via text-message from a Cingular Wireless cell phone. Of the show's three main sponsors, Ford is the only advertiser that doesn't share the stage with the contestants. That's a whole lot of money, given

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that this neuromarketing study would be the first time that the effectiveness of product placements has been scientifically tested.

Testing the Bang for the Buck ... or Bust?

Four hundred subjects took part in the SST study, each fitted with what looked like a floppy, black bathing cap wired with a dozen electrodes resembling tea candles. The specifically positioned electrodes enabled researchers to view and mathematically measure what the participants' brain waves were doing in real time, revealing such things as attraction and/or repulsion to a visual image.

The brain-scan subjects were presented with a sequence of 20 product logos, each one appearing for a single second. Some of the logos belonged to companies that aired 30-second commercials on "American Idol," including Coke, Cingular and Ford. These were termed "branded logos" for the study. Volunteers also saw logos from companies that had no products placed within the show — everything from Fanta to Target — and these were termed "unbranded logos."

Then the participants were shown a 20-minute special edition of "American Idol" and a 20-minute episode of a different program, followed by the exact same sequence of the 20 logos, three times in a row. Researchers found that prior to viewing the "Idol" segments, all subjects demonstrated the same level of recall for both "branded" and "unbranded" logos — this was the study's baseline.

However, after viewing the programs, subjects' memories of the branded logos, such as Coke's and Cingular's, significantly crowded out memories of the unbranded logos, including Pepsi's and Verizon's.

But then came the most bizarre, and potentially most profound finding of all. The SST results showed that Coke was much more memorable than Cingular and far, far more memorable than Ford. What was even more amazing was that Ford didn't just do poorly. In its post-program test, researchers found that subjects remembered less about the Ford commercials than before they entered the study. Bottom line: The Coke-saturated ads actually suppressed subjects' memories of Ford ads.

Product Placement: What Success Looks Like

To understand the results, think how each company's advertising was integrated into the program. Coke permeated 60 percent of the show's running time with artfully placed cups, furniture evoking the shape of its bottles and Coke-red walls. Ford, on the other hand, simply ran traditional commercials that didn't intrude on the program at all.

Products that play an integral part in the narrative of a program — such as Coke and, to a lesser extent, Cingular

Wireless — seem to not only increase consumer memory for those integrated products, but actually *weaken* the ability to remember other brands. But what is it within our brains that makes some products so much more memorable and appealing than others? ●

I'll Have What She's Having: Mirror Neurons at Work

Have you ever wondered why, when you're watching a baseball game and your favorite player strikes out in the ninth inning, you cringe — or alternately, why, when you're at the movies and the heroine starts weeping, tears well up in your own eyes?

Chalk it up to mirror neurons, which are nerve cells that fire when an action is being performed and when that same action is being observed. Mirror neurons explain why we often smile when we see someone who is happy or wince when we see someone in physical pain.

Yawn. Are you yawning now or feeling the initial stirrings of yawning? *Yawn.* If so, this can be explained by mirror neurons, which not only become activated when we're *observing* other people's behavior, they even fire when we're *reading* about someone's behavior. And that's exactly how our mirror neurons work on us as consumers as well.

Why You May Be Addicted to Shopping

Mirror neurons don't work alone. Often, they work in tandem with dopamine, one of the brain's pleasure chemicals. As we all know, whether our vice is shoes, CDs or electronics, shopping can be addictive. But does it actually make us happier? All scientific indicators point to yes — at least in the very short term.

And that dose of happiness can be attributed to dopamine, the brain's flush of reward, pleasure and well-being. When we first decide to buy something, the brain cells that release dopamine promote a burst of good feeling, and this dopamine rush fuels our instinct to keep shopping even when our rational mind tells us we've had enough.

So buyers beware, because the future of advertising isn't smoke and mirrors — it's mirror neurons. We're going to revisit cigarettes and the subject of craving, and look at how subliminal signals assailing us from billboards and store shelves can cause us to buy. ●

I Can't See Clearly Now: Subliminal Messaging

During the summer of 1957, at a movie theater in

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Fort Lee, N. J., a market researcher named James Vicary placed a mechanical slide projector in the screening room. The machine projected the words “Drink Coca-Cola” and “Eat Popcorn” onscreen for a duration of 1/3000th of one second every five seconds during every showing of the movie for six weeks.

Vicary, famous for coining the term *subliminal advertising*, claimed that during his experiment the Fort Lee theater saw an 18.1 percent increase in Coca-Cola sales and a whopping 57.8 percent surge in popcorn purchases, all thanks to the suggestive powers of his hidden messages.

Consumers were convinced that the government could use the same kind of under-the-radar technique to peddle propaganda or that the communists could use them to recruit supporters. As a result, American television networks and the National Association of Broadcasters banned subliminal ads in June 1958. However, in a subsequent interview in *Advertising Age*, Vicary somewhat puzzlingly admitted that his experiment was a gimmick — he’d made the whole thing up. Despite Vicary’s confession, a belief in the power of subliminal messaging had been firmly planted in the American mind.

Subliminal Messaging on Display

Generally speaking, subliminal messages are defined as visual, auditory or other sensory messages that register just below our level of conscious perception and can be detected only by the subconscious mind.

Today, some stores play tapes of jazz or Latino music that conceal recorded messages — imperceptible to our conscious minds — designed to prod shoppers into spending more or to discourage shoplifting. Among the messages: “Imagine owning it” and “Don’t take it, you’ll get caught.” According to one vendor, in stores that broadcast these tapes overall sales are up 15 percent, while store thefts have fallen by 58 percent.

In a variation of this phenomenon, cigarette company Philip Morris offers bar owners financial incentives to fill their venues with color schemes, specially designed furniture, ashtrays, suggestive tiles designed in captivating shapes similar to parts of the Marlboro logo and subtle symbols that, when combined, convey the very essence of Marlboro — without even mentioning the brand name or showing the actual logo.

These “installations” or “Marlboro Motels,” as they’re known in the business, usually consist of lounge areas with comfy Marlboro-red sofas positioned in front of TV screens spooling scenes of the Wild West — with its cowboys, horses, wide-open spaces and sunsets — all designed to evoke the essence of the iconic “Marlboro Man.” When put to the neuromarketing test, the effect

of these indirect branding tactics was stunning.

Big Tobacco Subliminally Benefits

In a study, researchers asked volunteers who smoked to refrain for two hours preceding the test, to ensure that their nicotine levels would be equal at the start. The subjects were first shown subliminal images that had no overt connection to cigarette brands — the aforementioned western-style scenery, cowboys, sunsets and deserts.

Next, to establish a comparison, they were shown explicit cigarette advertising images, such as the Marlboro Man and Joe Camel, as well as the cigarette brands’ logos, to determine whether the subliminal images would generate cravings similar to the ones generated by the logos.

To no one’s surprise, the fMRI scans revealed a pronounced response in the volunteers’ nucleus accumbens — the area of the brain involved with reward, craving and addiction — when they viewed the actual cigarette packs. But what was more interesting was that when the smokers were exposed to the non-explicit images — cowboys, a camel in the desert — there was immediate activity in the craving region of their brains, the exact same region that responded to the explicit images of the packs and logos. In fact, the logo-free images *associated* with cigarettes triggered *more* cravings among smokers than the logos or the images of the cigarette packs themselves.

One reason is that, since the subliminal images didn’t show any visible logos, the smokers weren’t consciously aware that they were viewing an advertising message and, as a result, they let their guard down. In other words, the tobacco companies’ efforts to link “innocent images” with smoking in our subconscious minds have paid off big time. While subliminal advertising appears to work for tobacco, there may be an even more powerful reason why we buy, and that reason can be summed up in one word — ritual. ●

Do You Believe in Magic: Ritual, Superstition and Why We Buy

The more unpredictable the world becomes, the more we grope for a sense of control over our lives and the more we adopt superstitious behaviors and rituals to help shepherd us through. As Dr. Bruce Hood, professor of experimental psychology at the University of Bristol in England, writes, “If you remove the appearance that we are in control, both humans and animals become stressed.”

Hood went on to prove this point during an address at the British Association Festival of Science in Norwich. In

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front of a roomful of *scientists*, Hood held up a blue sweater and offered 10 pounds (roughly \$30) to anyone who agreed to try it on. Hands flew up all over the room. Hood then told the audience that the sweater once belonged to Fred West, a serial killer alleged to have brutally murdered 12 young women, including his own wife. All but a handful of those same hands went down.

Hood then confessed that the piece of clothing didn't actually belong to Fred West. However, the mere *suggestion* that the sweater had been worn by the killer was enough to make the scientists shy away. Rationally or not, we unwittingly ascribe similar power to objects such as "lucky" coins, wedding rings and so on.

Buying Into Superstition and Ritual

Products and brands that have rituals or superstitions associated with them are much "stickier" than those that don't. In an unsettled, fast-moving world, we're all searching for stability and familiarity, and product rituals give us an illusion of comfort and belonging. After all, most of us are creatures of habit.

People who own an Apple iPod are no doubt accustomed to its ritualized navigation. Most iPod users could press Music, then Artists, followed by their favorite track, in their sleep. Why court confusion by buying an MP3 player made by Philips or a Microsoft Zune?

Food rituals, too, can be found everywhere, from breaking the wishbone after a Thanksgiving dinner to how we like to eat our Oreo cookies. When it comes to Oreos, there are distinct rituals. Some people like to pry open the cookie, lick off the white frosting in between, then eat the two wafers. Others like to keep the sandwich cookie intact and dunk the whole thing in a glass of cold milk.

The reality is that rituals help us form emotional connections with brands and products. They make the things we buy memorable. ●

Say a Little Prayer: Faith, Religion, and Brands

It doesn't seem like a huge leap of faith to transition from discussing the power of brand ritual to exploring possible connections between religion and buying habits.

Consider a Brooklyn-based company called Holy Land Earth. The company's founder, Steven Friedman, says that many religions consider the ground of Israel to be sacred, and his company imports this divine soil to anyone who wants a small piece of the Holy Land in 10-pound bags. Turns out that a handful of soil from the Holy Land can

add a touch of the sacred to religious burials, and it can also be used to bless plants, trees, houses and buildings.

If people are willing to pay sums large and small for things that they believe have religious or spiritual significance, then clearly spirituality and branding are inextricably linked. Some brands seem to embody this passionate connection more than others.

Exploring the Passion of Brand Zealots

Lindstrom's researchers sought to explore the powerful connection between test subjects and the iconic brands Guinness, Harley-Davidson, Ferrari and iPod. As baseline comparatives, the study also included images of well-known brands with less consumer engagement (e.g., Microsoft, BP), as well as star athletes and religious icons.

Volunteers were connected to an fMRI machine and exposed to a host of images: A bottle of Coca-Cola. The Pope. An iPod. The World Cup. Rosary beads. A Ferrari sports car. The eBay logo. David Beckham. Mother Teresa. And so on.

Not surprisingly, Guinness, Harley-Davidson, Ferrari and iPod produced greater activity in many areas of the brain involved in memory, emotion, decision making and meaning than weaker brands did. However, researchers found when participants viewed images associated with the iconic brands, the subjects' brains registered the exact same patterns of brain activity as they did when they viewed the religious images. ●

Why We Choose: The Power of Somatic Markers

Despite those compelling findings regarding iconic brands, a recent study by German brand and retail experts Gruppe Nymphenberg found that more than 50 percent of all purchasing decisions by shoppers are made spontaneously — and therefore unconsciously — at the point of sale. These brain shortcuts have another name, "somatic markers."

How Somatic Markers are Created

Somatic markers aren't simply a collection of reflexes from childhood to adolescence. Every day, we manufacture new ones, adding them to the bulging collection already in place, and companies and advertisers work deliberately to create somatic markers within our brains.

- Sony created an ingenious somatic marker in the weeks before the release of "Spider-Man 3," using men's rooms in selected theaters. A guy enters and sees a conventional row of urinals. However, gazing up he sees a single plastic stand-alone urinal 7 feet above his

head on the wall. Next to it: the words “Spider-Man 3’... Coming Soon.”

- For a fear-driven somatic marker, it’s worth considering Johnson’s No More Tears baby shampoo. What does it evoke? Fear of the same thing it promises to help you avoid: tears. Memories of stinging red eyes, from childhood onward.

Of course, not all somatic markers are based on pain or fear. Some of the most effective ones are rooted in sensory experiences, which in fact can be quite pleasant. ●

A Sense of Wonder: Selling to Our Senses

Advertisers have long assumed that the logo is *everything*. Companies have spent thousands of hours and millions of dollars creating, tweaking, altering and testing their logos — and making sure those logos are in our faces. But the truth of the matter is, visual images are far more effective, and more memorable, when they are coupled with another sense — such as hearing or smell. It’s called *sensory branding*.

Getting the Senses to Work Together

Lindstrom’s neuromarketing study explored the brain activity of subjects exposed to images (including logos) and fragrances of four well-known brands. First the images and fragrances were presented individually and then at the same time. These included Johnson’s No More Tears baby shampoo, Dove soap and Coca-Cola, and an assortment of images and aromas from a global chain of fast-food restaurants.

After crunching the data, researchers found that when volunteers were presented with the images and fragrances individually, they found them equally pleasant to look at as to smell. However, when the images and fragrances were presented at the same time, the subjects rated the image-fragrance combinations to be more appealing than either the image or fragrance alone. This led to the conclusion that odor activates many of the exact same brain regions as the sight of a product — even sight of the product’s logo.

Not only does “the nose know” but many marketers like to “play by ear” as well.

Seeing and Hearing Are Believing

Sound branding has been around for decades. For example, Kellogg’s has spent many years cultivating a signature sound, even going so far as to hire a Danish lab to design a one-of-a-kind *crunch*, so that any child would be able to hear the difference between the sound of eating

generic cornflakes and Kellogg’s. Other examples include the following :

- The Ford Motor Company created a new latch system for its Taurus models that makes a recognizable vault-like sound when the doors open.
- The sound a can of Pringles potato chips makes when opened was largely engineered to make consumers associate the product with lip-smacking freshness.

Thanks to fMRI, we now know the extent to which the senses are intertwined. The next step will be to determine whether neuromarketing can predict the future success or failure of a product. ●

Neuromarketing: Predicting the Future

Regardless of the item, companies are woefully bad at predicting how we, as consumers, will respond to their products. Because what we say we feel about a product can never truly predict how we behave, and market research is largely unreliable. Can neuromarketing succeed where market research has resoundingly failed? Can it reliably, scientifically predict the failure of a brand or product?

To Be or Not to Be, That Is the Product Question

In late 2006, FremantleMedia — the company that owns “American Idol” — had created a television program called “Quizmania,” which it described as “the U.K’s most entertaining quiz show.” “Quizmania” hadn’t debuted in the United States, and there was no guarantee it ever would. That’s where Lindstrom’s neuromarketing study came in — to find out if audience members’ brains could reliably predict whether or not a new and as-yet-unseen TV program would be a hit with American viewers.

Two hundred neuromarketing volunteers were fitted with SST caps, and the electrodes were positioned over specific portions of their brains. To ensure an accurate result, researchers needed some of the subjects to view a program that was a “proven failure” and others to view a “proven success” in addition to the “Quizmania” program.

Half watched the failure, a makeover reality show known as “The Swan.” In it, two ordinary-looking women are dubbed ugly ducklings, then transformed, through plastic surgery, diet and cosmetics, into swans. At that point, members of the viewing audience call in and vote for their favorite contestant to advance to the next round.

The other half watched a popular TV show called “How Clean Is Your House?” In this British-made real-

ity show, two exacting, middle-aged busybodies show up at the door of an unkempt home, express outrage at its condition and then make it over into a dream house.

Based on viewers' responses to the three programs, as measured by fMRI "The Swan" was the least engaging, "How Clean Is Your House?" the most engaging and "Quizmania" lay somewhere in between the two. The researchers concluded (with a 99 percent degree of statistical certainty) that "Quizmania" — if and when it ever aired in the U.S. — would be more successful than "The Swan," but less successful than "How Clean Is Your House?" In short, the U.S. findings predicted the actual U.K. performance of these programs. ●

Let's Spend the Night Together: Sex in Advertising

Sex in advertising is everywhere — TV commercials, magazines, retail spaces, the Internet and billboards. But does it actually help sell the products it's supposedly advertising? In 2007, University College London set out to study how well consumers recall sexually suggestive commercials.

The study divided 60 young adults into four groups. Two groups watched an episode of "Sex and the City" in which the female characters discussed whether or not they were good in bed, while the other two groups watched an episode of the family sitcom "Malcolm in the Middle." During the commercial breaks, one segment of each group viewed a series of sexually suggestive ads, while the other two groups watched ads with no sexual content whatsoever.

Turns out that the subjects who had viewed the sexually suggestive ads were no better at recalling them than the subjects who had viewed the unerotic ads. What's more, the "Sex and the City" viewers had worse recall of the ads they had seen than the "Malcolm in the Middle" viewers — it seemed their memory of the sexually explicit commercials had been eclipsed by the sexual content in the show. Researchers concluded that "sex does not sell anything other than itself."

Because we're overexposed to images of sex, in coming years advertisers will be forced to fight for our attention by upping the ante with more overt sexuality. This will ultimately backfire; a decade from now, most of us will have become so desensitized to sex in advertising we won't even notice it anymore. ●

Voyeuristic Consumerism

Think about how other people's behavior affects your shopping experience and ultimately influences your purchasing experience. Take the extreme example of a Michigan teenager named Nick Baily.

On Nov. 6, 2006, Nintendo released its highly anticipated Wii gaming system — the machine that allows players to simulate the full range of motion depicted on the screen using a hand-held remote. After 17 hours of waiting in line at his local Toys "R" Us store, the high school senior rushed home, his Wii tucked under one arm.

Before opening the package, Nick set up his video camera, clipped a microphone to his shirt and pressed Record. Only then, with video rolling, did he begin unsealing his Wii.

A couple of hours later, Nick's very own grand opening could be viewed on YouTube. And it was — approximately 71,000 times in the first week alone. It seemed that simply watching someone else enjoying the opening of a new Wii gave Nintendo fans out there almost as much pleasure as opening that new Wii themselves. This concept of imitation is a huge factor in why we buy the things we do, driven in large part by mirror neurons.

Conclusion: Brand New Day

The fact is that most marketing, advertising and branding strategies are a guessing game. Until now, marketers and advertisers haven't really known what drives our behavior. But thanks to neuromarketing, we now know that roughly 90 percent of our consumer buying behavior is unconscious. The time has come for a paradigm shift.

Neuromarketing is still in its infancy and is only going to expand its reach. Though it may never be able to tell us exactly where the "buy button" resides in our brain, (and thank God for that!) it will certainly help predict certain directions and trends that will alter the face, and the fate, of commerce around the world. ●

RECOMMENDED READING LIST

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1. ***Outside Innovation* by Patricia B. Seybold.** Innovation is what keeps companies at the top of their fields, and Seybold shows the way.
2. ***Blink* by Malcolm Gladwell.** Drawing on cutting-edge neuroscience and psychology, Gladwell will change the way you understand every decision you make.
3. ***Meatball Sundae* by Seth Godin.** Godin's latest book is the definitive guide to the 14 trends no marketer can afford to ignore.