This is your Buyology by Martin Lindstrom

Does sex sell? What do religion and ritual have in common with successful brands? How successful is product placement? Does subliminal advertising really influence our behavior? Based on the largest neuromarketing study ever conducted, Buyology separates the truths from the lies about why we buy, revealing how marketers and advertisers truly capture our attention, our loyalty, and our dollars.

Buyology unveil the results of marketing guru Martin Lindstrom’s pioneering three-year, $7 million dollar study that used the latest in brain scan technology to peer into the minds of over 2,000 people from around the world. The shocking results will overturn reveal why so much of what we thought we knew about why we buy is wrong, rewriting the rules of marketing and advertising in the process.

CHAPTER 1: A rush of blood to the head

Many of our buying decisions take place so deep within our subconscious minds, that we’re not aware of what is driving them. By using the most sophisticated brain scanning techniques available, a team of scientists from across the world spent close to four years scanning consumers’ brains. Neuromarketing is a powerful new research methodology, and it promises to challenge the tenets of traditional market research. Whether it’s a pack of cigarettes, a new car, or a can of soda, the Project Buyology research findings shed fascinating new light on why we buy the things we do. The $7 million project questioned everything we thought we knew about why we buy. ‘A rush of blood to the head’ takes the reader on a journey of shopping discovery – on that will put governments on alert and cause upheaval for a multibillion dollar industry whose secret marketing weapon finally has been uncovered.
Chapter 2 – This must be the place

As you watched E.T. gather up those Reese’s Pieces one by one, did you crave that distinctive taste? As Tom Cruise slid on his Ray Bans in ‘Top Gun’ did you wish you too had a pair? When Simon Cowell took a sip of Coca-Cola during an episode of ‘American Idol’, did you feel an inexplicable thirst? The Coca-Cola Company, and the two other key sponsors of ‘American Idol’ hope so, since they each shell out over $26 million annually on their ‘American Idol’ campaigns. Marketers have believed in the efficacy of product placement for decades, Project Buyology monitored the brains of hundreds of ‘American Idol’ viewers to ascertain if this belief was well-founded. We monitored reactions to Simon idly sipping a Coke, Paula Abdul casually mentioning Ford as she was raved about a hopeful performer, and Ryan Seacrest, reminding viewers to vote for their favourite contestant via AT&T Wireless text-messaging. Did consumers’ brains pick up on the brand placements, or were they lost among the 2,000 other brand messages we receive every day? In 2006, companies paid a total of $3.36 billion globally to have their products placed in TV shows, movies and music videos. Yet no-one has put the technique of product placement to the test. Not, that is, until September 2007, when Project Buyology scanned hundreds of consumer brains to test the effectiveness of product placement for the very first time.

Chapter 3 – I’ll have what she’s having

In 2004, Steve Jobs, the founder and CEO of Apple, was strolling along Madison Avenue in New York City when he noticed something strange, and gratifying. Hip white earphones snaking out of people’s ears, dangling across their chests, peeking out of pockets, purses and backpacks. They were everywhere. “Oh, my God, it’s starting to happen,” Jobs reported. But there was more to this story: a discovery made in the late 80s involving the macaque monkey would be instrumental in understanding why the iPod would become one of the world’s biggest brand successes. So, what does the behavior of a macaque monkey have to do with the astounding popularity of the iPod? A little function in our brain so significant that it is to psychology what DNA is to molecular biology, provides the explanation sheds light on a wide range of consumer behaviors. It explains why a simple smile from a salesperson can compel us to spend more money, why video games like ‘Guitar Hero’ are so popular, and why we’re hardwired to shop until we drop.

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Chapter 4 – I can’t see clearly now

In 1957, when a market researcher named James Vicary claimed that a lightning-quick image of a Coca-Cola bottle – flashed for less than 1/3000th of a second on a movie screen – was enough to make the audience rush to the concession stands, America was shocked. If marketers could use hidden messages to get us to buy, couldn’t other agencies use similar tactics to psychologically manipulate our behavior? The term ‘subliminal advertising’ was coined, and its practice just as quickly banned, in 1957. Since then, no-one has explored the potential influence of subliminal advertising. Fifty years later, scientists from across the world gathered in a lab in Oxford under Project Buyology. Lindstrom and some of the world’s most respected neuroscientists embarked on a mission to discover whether or not subliminal messages still surround us, and the extent to which they really influence our behavior. But be warned, what you’re about to see – or rather not see – may alarm you.

Chapter 5 – Do you believe in magic?

Let’s pretend we’re at a beachfront bar in Acapulco. Two ice-cold Coronas coming right up, complete with lime wedges. We give the limes a squeeze, and stick them inside the necks of our bottles, tip the bottles upside down until the bubbles begin to get that nice fizz, and take a sip. Cheers. But first, let me pester you with a multiple choice question. The Corona beer-and-lime ritual we just performed – any idea how that might have come about?
A) That’s the way Latin cultures quaff their Coronas.
B) The ritual derives from an ancient Meso-American technique for combating germs, since the lime’s acidity destroys bacteria.
C) A bartender at an unnamed restaurant, on a random bet with his buddy, popped a lime wedge into the neck of a Corona to see if he could get other patrons to do the same.
When you’ve read this chapter you’ll see the Corona beer ritual in a whole new light. As you will the thousands of rituals that manufacturers build into brands to seduce you. Just like having a lucky pen you always take to important meetings, or the fear of the number 13, eating the filling of your Oreo cookie first – turns out, the relationship between such everyday rituals and why we buy is close and inescapable. And as you’ll read in Buyology, many of the rituals we habitually perform in our daily lives were actually orchestrated by companies and marketers to draw us to their brands and products.

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Chapter 6 – I say a little prayer

What connection, if any, exists between religion and our buying behavior? Are there similarities between the way our brains respond to religious and spiritual symbols, and the way they react to products or brands? Could certain products inspire the same sense of devotion and loyalty in us, as those provoked by faith or religion? Might companies be borrowing from the world of religion, without our knowing it, when advertising their products? Project Buyology wasn’t downplaying the importance of religion in people’s lives when it found that these connections were more powerful than we ever realized. It is as controversial a proposition as can be imagined – the relationship between religion and branding. But what explains why Apple fans queue for days to get hold of an iPhone, why Harley-Davidson riders are obsessed with their bikes, and why a girl’s love of Hello Kitty sent a family broke?

Chapter 7 – Why did I choose you?

Did you know that 60 percent of the products we buy in the supermarket we choose spontaneously, and that 80 percent of these we picked within just four seconds? We make hundreds of snap decisions each and every day. Yet so many of them happen deep within our subconscious, so fast and far instinctively we’re barely aware of them. In Buyology, you’ll read how companies plant instant shortcuts – or brand bookmarks – in our subconscious to help us decide what to (or what not to) buy. And yes, your brain too holds some of them and they’ve probably influenced everything from the make of the last car you decided to buy to the brand of coffee you brewed this morning. Some brands are discovering the key to controlling those four vital seconds that we spend at the supermarket shelf – learning how to encourage us within that tiny timeframe to pick their brand instead of another. The somatic marker phenomenon led Project Buyology into an experiment involving one of the best-known – and apparently irritating – sounds in the world, revealing findings that left the marketing executives at Nokia flabbergasted.
Chapter 8 – This must be the place

Does your heart rate increase when you glimpse one of those signature robin-egg blue Tiffany boxes? Or maybe you feel your pulse race when you inhale the scent of a new car. A few years ago, Martin Lindstrom conducted a test. He presented 600 women with an empty Tiffany’s box each. Monitoring their heart rates and blood pressure, researchers found that, when the women received the box, their heart rates went up 20 percent. The women saw no logo, just the color. Its powerful associations with engagement, marriage, babies and fertility got those hearts racing. Similarly, Project Buyology set out to discover why Play-Doh and Crayola seem to spark a special recognition in us as we smell. And why there is much more to Johnson & Johnson’s baby powder than its wonderful smell. In a fascinating experiment, Lindstrom and his team of neuroscientists used fMRI technology to examine the influence our senses have on what we buy.

Chapter 9 – And the answer is...

Remember when Coke altered its secret recipe to produce New Coke? Sales plummeted. Sure, the company had tested the new product before embarking on this multi-million dollar disaster. So how did the 200,000 people who participated in the extensive market research get it wrong? The fact is, nine out of ten product releases fail. So if market research is so unreliable, how can companies get the information they need to develop products that consumers really want? It’s time for a new approach. Via neuromarketing, Lindstrom and his team examined consumer brains to uncover the hidden motivations, needs and desires that our conscious minds aren’t aware of. Using the pilot of a TV game show as the test product, Lindstrom and the team discovered that what hundreds of test participants said they hated they really kind of loved.
Chapter 10 – Let’s spend the night together

Are you interested in sex? That got your attention, didn’t it? In this chapter, Lindstrom and his team of neuroscientists take a look at whether sex in advertising succeeds in seducing our interest in products, or whether it backfires. Sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn’t. From Calvin Klein to an Italian ad campaign that will make you shudder, Buyology puts an age-old question to the test: does sex sell?

Chapter 11 – Summary

Buyology bears witness to an historic meeting between science and marketing: a union of apparent opposites that sheds new light on why we make decisions about what we buy. Thanks to neuroimaging, we can now understand better what really drives our behavior, our opinions, our preference for Corona over Budweiser, iPods over Zunes, or MacDonald’s over Wendy’s. Through Project Buyology, neuromarketing has emerged as a powerful new tool in understanding consumers’ decision-making processes. This methodology is ready to revolutionize our understanding of our own buying behavior and send shock waves throughout the marketing and advertising industries as well as the business world. You’re about to discover your own ‘buyology’.

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