

Buyology Summary

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1-Sentence-Summary: *Buyology* shows you how to spend less money by revealing the psychological traps that companies use to hack your brain and get you to purchase their products without you even realizing they're doing it.

Read in: 4 minutes

Favorite quote from the author:



What's your most recent expensive purchase? Think back and try to remember why you bought it. Was it because, in your rational thinking, that was the best option? Or do you feel loyal to a particular brand?

As much as we'd like to think we act logically when we buy things, the truth is that we usually don't. It often comes down to more of a gut feeling rather than actually weighing out the pros and cons of a purchase. Why does this happen? And what do companies know about us that they use to get us to buy their stuff?

These are just a few of the lessons you'll learn in Martin Lindstrom's *Buyology: Truth and Lies About Why We Buy*. After this one, you'll be wiser about how to spot tricky marketing tactics. And if you're in business yourself you might just learn a few secrets to boost your sales.

Here are the 3 biggest lessons I've learned from this book:

1. We are biologically wired to buy more when products are advertised in certain ways because it increases our chances of reproducing.
2. If watching an advertisement makes you scared, the chances increase that you'll purchase whatever it's selling.

3. One way that companies get us to buy more is through subliminal messages.

Ready to learn how to outsmart advertisements? Let's go!

Lesson 1: **Biologically we're highly motivated to do things that make us more likely to reproduce, and marketers use this to get us to buy.**

Who are you with right now? Try yawning and pay close attention to anyone that follows suit. Did anybody copy you? If not, you can try it with a close friend or significant other. Usually, it's tough to resist yawning when we see someone else do it.

This is because mirror neurons in our brains make us want to mimic others actions. One study revealed this effect in monkeys. Certain parts of the brain lit up when they were grabbing a nut *and* when they were watching another monkey do it too.

Human brains work this way, too. Whether we're performing an action or watching someone else do it, our brains react almost the same. **So in an advertisement, when you see someone sipping Coca-Cola or wearing an Abercrombie & Fitch shirt, your brain wants to mimic them, so you buy.**

Dopamine also works in conjunction with mirror neurons to persuade you to make purchases. This pleasure hormone is present when we go shopping and can make us spend more than we might normally.

Let's look at evolution to understand this. When we spend money to get new things, we consider it a status upgrade. And this trait, which we got from our ancient ancestors, makes us more likely to reproduce. The dopamine hit we get when shopping is our body's evolutionary response to get us to do things that will make it more likely we'll have more offspring.

Lesson 2: **You're more likely to purchase whatever a company is selling if their ad makes you afraid.**

Using mirror neurons to entice us to buy is devious but not completely harmful. But not all marketing tactics are so nice. Some take advantage of our negative emotions like fear to get us to shop more.

Think about the last time you were scared. What did you want most? To not be afraid, right? You could say that you sought safety. Sometimes that security comes to us in the form of a product the seller is advertising as relief from the fears we have.

A shaving cream commercial, for example, might tug on your fear of living alone by emphasizing the unattractiveness of unkempt hair. But they also give you the solution in their product. **Using it to spruce yourself up and become more attractive is shown as a place of safety from what you're afraid of.**

One example of this working particularly well was a commercial that Lyndon B. Johnson used when running for president. A child is shown enjoying some daisies when a nuclear explosion goes off in the background. Johnson's ad positioned himself as the one to vote for to be safe from the unsettling chances of nuclear war.

Some products also get us to buy on the pretense that we won't have negative experiences if we have them. Security software for computers or diet supplements are just two examples.

Another is the *No More Tears Baby Shampoo*. Nobody likes having soap in their eyes, especially babies. This product makes a good point to tout that those who have it won't have to deal with a crying infant, at least during bathtime.

Lesson 3: Subliminal messaging is a powerful tool that advertisers still use to convince us to purchase whatever they are selling.

Did you know that companies used to flash pictures or sounds of what they wanted you to buy for tiny fractions of time during people's regular media consumption? The quick interruption was unnoticeable by the person's conscious mind, but subconsciously they were taking in the message that they should purchase a product.

And it worked, but a little too well. The process was banned in the late 1950s, but that doesn't mean that similar tactics are entirely gone.

The reality is anything that attempts to get us to buy without our realizing that it's influencing us is subliminal messaging. There's a popular sandwich chain around where I live that advertises "free smells," for example.

I used to wonder why they would do that but now it's obvious. **People smelling the restaurant's food are enticed to purchase it, usually without even realizing that's what's happening.**

You don't have to go far to see this in action. It might be a piano playing a posh tune while you're shopping for a new suit. Or the feeling of getting into a clean car that smells great at the dealer.

Research shows this works, too. One study had people look at a grumpy face and a happy face, then pour themselves a drink and say how much they thought it was worth. Those that saw smiling faces poured more and said they'd pay more for it!

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Buyology Review

What a fascinating book! *Buyology* is a great read to help you make more informed decisions as a consumer. I always suspected that companies play on our psychology without knowing to get us to buy, but I had no idea how deep it really went!

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Who would I recommend the Buyology summary to?

The 21-year-old who spends too much money and wants to find ways they can stop, the 43-year-old marketing manager who needs some new ideas for how to get customers to buy, and anyone who is curious about the psychology of buying.