



BOOK REVIEW

BUY-OLOGY

* Mrs. SUMANGALA TALUR

Pages: 239

Rs:468/-

Buy-ology is a journey into the minds of consumers. The book is based on the new concept of Neuromarketing which is an amalgamation of science and marketing. Here the author shares his experiences and findings of his three year long high profile expensive experiments involving brain scanning. It is a new budding concept of understanding the unconscious decisions a person's brain makes when he encounters advertising. The results of the experiments are awful.

The book revolves around the fMRI (functional magnetic resonance imaging), Brain scanning through which many mysteries are cracked such as "Why do people smoke despite numerous health warnings". It is rather shocking to know that those warning signs on the packages actually encourage the smokers to smoke more. Well, subliminal advertising is wonderfully working for these companies. Here I have my own doubts. Any person who is addicted to something, like smoking, will averse to staying without smoking for long time. And the volunteers chosen for the experiment were asked to not to smoke for two hours before they appeared for the test.

It is very obvious that the volunteer's mind is already craving for his regular dose of the smoke. When we miss something very badly we tend to visualise that particular thing in everything around us. Under such circumstances it is very hard to believe and accept that the warning sign on these cigarette packages encourage the people to smoke more.

Further, it is interesting to know how powerful brands are built by using symbols, rituals, storytelling, etc., and brands and Religion are very much alike. It is quite natural to be alike as both are basically driven by emotions and rationale has very little space there.

"Sex does not sell" it is a proven fact but still the use of sex appeal in advertisements is on the rise. This puzzle is very beautifully solved and the truth is that the controversies which arise from these ads will help the product to sell and not the sex. The research has shown that the sexually suggestive material takes away the attention of the viewer and easily blocks the other information in the ad.

Product placements in movies if done thoughtfully and if the product gels well with the storyline will yield better results.

* Sr.Lecturer, SRN Adarsh College, Chamarajpet, Bangalore.
E-mail: sumangalatalur@yahoo.com Mobile : 9740119585

Ray-Ban's success is a good example to this. Subsequently in 'Another Day' when twenty three products were shown in 123 minutes the audience were irritated and nothing was able to hold the attention of the viewers. This fact is very well supported by the results of experiments that people will not remember the brands that don't play an integral part in the storyline of a program. On American Idol, a television program Coke and Cingular wireless not only run ads during commercial breaks, they also feature their products prominently during the show as well. Ford was the only advertiser that did not share an actual stage with contestants. When tests conducted people could remember Coke and Cingular but not Ford. Here my contention is Coke and Cingular already existing strong brands. Remembering them is not difficult for anyone. Yes, if they are woven more logically and meaningfully with the programs will yield fabulous results.

The book definitely has something in store for the sellers as well as buyers. My journey through the book has transformed me from a novice marketer to a well equipped strategist and from a casual consumer to a learned purchaser. It is indeed a matter of rejoice for the advertisers that they got a route to enter into the "Black Box" the human mind. Until recently they were dependent on their gut feelings, guesses or on the research findings to choose their strategy. In spite of all these efforts, nine out of ten products fail miserably. Now since they have a tool using which they can understand what a consumer thinks, feels, likes or hates subconsciously, can hope for 99% success as 1% luck is always required.

As a consumer I feel it is definitely unethical as these experiments invade our privacy and expose our unconscious feelings which are exploited to satisfy their greed.

The author talks about mirror neurons and theory of imitation which I feel will work very rarely. I believe that any normal human being lives in reality. They understand what they are and what they want. Yes, people do get carried away but not always!! The author here contradicts his own statements. At one point he says people see themselves and imitate the super models in the advertisements. On the contrary he quotes an example where in a suburban mom shopping for a new car prefers Subaru to Audi because she recognises herself with the prior one. Hence I refuse to accept it as universal phenomena. However now since the buyer is aware about the marketer's influences, can be more conscious and guard himself against the marketing tricks.

Further, the author presents success stories of many companies which, with the help of brain scanning experiments could achieve the desired results. This will encourage many companies to use this tool to replicate this success. At this juncture we have to understand that neuromarketing is just a tool and does not guarantee success. Now this is new, rare and hence more effective. Later when almost all of them adopt the same tool, the chances are high that it loses its lustre and becomes less effective. When ten products are competing in the market all can't become a hit. Some have to fail and it is quite natural. Can we fight the law of nature? Then we may have to adopt a new law "The survival of the luckiest".

Mrs. Sumangala Talur
Sr. Lecturer, AIMIT, Bangalore.