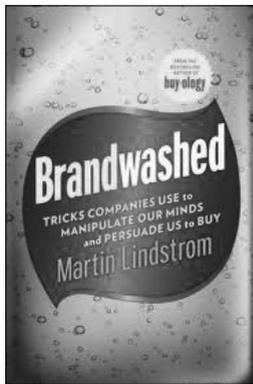


Book Reviews

Brandwashed. Tricks companies use to manipulate our minds and persuade us to buy.

Author: Martin Lindstrom

Publisher: Kogan Page Limited, UK, 2012



The book *“Brandwashed. Tricks companies use to manipulate our minds and persuade us to buy”* is written by Martin Lindstrom, one of the most appreciated and recognized branding and neuromarketing specialists. The book is part of a set of scientific writings dedicated to neuromarketing, a domain located at the boundary between marketing and neuroscience. Among the most important books written by Martin Lindstrom, there are also *Buyology*, *Brand Sense*, or *Brand Child*.

In a world that becomes more and more complex in respect to both the marketing strategies and the human buying behavior, persuasion becomes a keyword. The book *“Brandwashed. Tricks companies use to manipulate our minds and persuade us to buy”* is an outstanding review of the persuasion and manipulation techniques used by companies in order to consciously or unconsciously convince individuals to buy. Using examples from a large range of domains, the author tries to make the reader see beyond the act of purchasing. He is emphasizing that there is no random decision when it comes to marketing strategy. The place of a product in a supermarket’s shelf, the music one can hear when entering a shop, or the smell one can feel in a certain department store are not arbitrary.

The reviewed book represents a state of the art work in the neuromarketing domain, a very new and still insufficiently explored domain. Being based on a large number of nowadays examples, research, and experiments, the importance and the actuality of the subject are uncounted. Living in a world in which people give more and more desirable answers within surveys, focus groups, or interviews, the study of the brain’s reaction to certain incentives becomes a necessity.

The author starts the book by describing a self-experiment. Being an international prestigious marketing specialist and a pretentious consumer, Martin Lindstrom wanted to see if he is capable to brand detoxify himself. After six months in which he did not buy any brand, he gave up. In addition, he started to buy all the desired brands. He admitted that he, a marketing specialist, was *brand washed*. Based on this experiment, the book is presenting some of the most unexpected and controversial ways used by companies in order to make people buy. All these strategies are accompanied by a large amount of examples and of data from research using fMRI (functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging)

The first strategy refers to the fact that companies either manipulate us since childhood (children see commercials before learning to walk and talk) or are focusing on memories associated with childhood (the use of brands associated with childhood's preferences). Moreover, the research stresses that certain stimuli, as music, scent or eating habits, can start to influence the adult purchasing behavior even since before an individual is born. Thus, people can be biologically programmed to develop a certain preference from the uterus. An example might be eloquent: if the mother consumes high quantities of junk food during pregnancy, there is much more likely that, later, the child develops a strong affinity for this type of food. Thus, children start to create certain preferences very early, preferences that are going to influence them for the rest of their life. In the same respect, besides the parents' responsibility of directly or indirectly influencing the preferences of the child by using certain product, the persuasion works the other way around as well. Martin Lindstrom talks about several universal persuasion techniques of children: negotiation, making a scene, keying up a parent against the other, creeping a product in the market basket.

A second strategy deals with doing commerce by using panic and paranoia. In a context characterized by fear, as in the case of hurricanes or diseases, individuals tend to act irrationally and instinctively. In addition, the author claims that fear is contagious. Other people's fear induces our fear as well. Biologically speaking, in contexts characterized by threat, the human body redirects blood from the brain to other parts of the body. Strongly related with fear it is the uncertainty feeling. Emphasizing the future own identity, companies persuade us in buying certain products in order not to smell bad, not to look ugly, not to have disheveled hair and so on. Studies have proven that women, and especially mothers, are more inclined to feel fear and guilt than men do. Thus, fear of death, illness or ageing are highly speculated within marketing strategies.

The third strategy used by companies in order to persuade individuals to buy is addiction creation. Although not so dangerous but similar with alcohol or drugs addiction, there is brand and shopping addiction (*oniomania*). This affection is usually associated with other disorders, as anxiety, food disorders or abuse of certain substances. Moreover, there is a medicine (*citalopram*) used in order to confute the uncontrollable impulses for shopping. At the bottom of the shopping addiction, as

in the case of any addictions, there is the dopamine, a neurotransmitter of the sensation of wellness, of ecstasy. The more the addiction object is experienced, the more tolerance is being developed. Thus, a higher quantity of that behavior is needed. In this respect, Martin Lindstrom talks about a secret ingredient, especially used in food, beverage or cosmetic industries: appetency.

A fourth strategy is sex. Although there are numerous research projects that underline that sexual content within a commercial reduces the probability of remembering the brand, sex is still very much used in marketing. By discussing the differences between men and women in respect to perception, the book is emphasizing the fact that buying behavior of men is permanently changing. Men have become more concerned in looking good and in spending for this. Thus, either it is about sexual fantasies, about nostalgia for the own youth, or about the subtle promise of making an individual more physically attractive, companies call on human needs.

The fifth strategy Martin Lindstrom is talking about is the power of fellow creatures. There is research that talks about the tendency of large number of people to unconsciously follow a minority group. Being different from the others, usually creates a major discomfort. The book underlines the individuals' inclination to buy popular products or to desire to be like the others. The anxiety associated to non-conformity motivates people to change their options towards consent. Moreover, the power of word of mouth is equally precious in marketing. Something recommended by a friend or by a respectable person is very likely to be purchased. In the same respect, self-esteem is being discussed.

The sixth strategy refers to nostalgia. In this context, Martin Lindstrom talks about data that have revealed that people usually remember past experiences into a more favorable light. In addition, the more individuals grow older the more intense they are attached to the past. Companies know all these issues. Therefore, one of the main goals of any advertising campaign is to establish a self-moment in time, a moment that will further create nostalgia and that will become a reference moment. One of the most efficient techniques used in order to create nostalgia is reuse of certain commercials, slogans or advertising campaigns from the past.

The seventh strategy named by Martin Lindstrom is the use of celebrities or icons within advertising campaigns. The research shows that if a population believe in something, there is a decrease of death percentages, people are happier, they live longer and use less social services. Interestingly, there are proofs that persuasion power of celebrities has biological bases. A study conducted in Holland shows that the image of a celebrity that recommends a product modifies the cerebral activity of women. Concluding, when a trustful authority stresses an opinion, the brain gives up in assuming responsibilities.

An eight strategy is that of creating or inducing hope. People usually do not buy only a product, but an entire idea integrated within that product, regardless if the idea is about health, happiness, or responsibility. By emphasizing the concept of

spiritual marketing, Martin Lindstrom stresses that companies try to sell products by presenting those products as being magical, calming or supernatural.

The last strategy talks about data mining. It refers to all the information and details companies know about buyers from internet, fidelity cards, credit cards or other documents a client fills in. Being able to create customers' profiles, companies adjust their marketing strategies in order to make the perfect match between an individual's needs and an offer. Thus, as New York Times has stated, we live in a post-confidential society in which we do not know anymore all the big brother entities.

The book ends by presenting an experiment inspired by the movie *The Joneses*. Underlying the power of the word of mouth, the experiment consists of using an undercover family that aims to influence their friends and neighbors in buying certain brands. The results show that spoken marketing is a precious strategy.

Based on the above summary, I consider that "*Brandwashed. Tricks companies use to manipulate our minds and persuade us to buy*" is a book that strongly deserves to be read by any consumer. Either it is about simple readers or about scientists, Martin Lindstrom uses a common and easily to understand language. Moreover, although the book abounds in examples and information, it is logically structured and facile to be read. Due to Martin Lindstrom's experience, the study is an original and unique lecture. Based on its novelty and intriguingness, the manuscript becomes fascinating and of great impact. Thus, the book creates the need to find out more and more about the marketing strategies and thus to read it all at once.

Although more examples of fRMI detailed experiments would have been interesting to be presented, the reviewed publication is important for three different categories. First, from the point of view of business men, the book creates a relevant overview of techniques that can be used in order to convince individuals to buy. Second, from the point of view of consumers, the book reveals the way companies manipulate and thus the elements that common individuals should defend of. Finally, from a scientific point of view, the study represents a critical analysis of the way the human brain functions and reacts to certain stimuli.

Concluding, the most intriguing aspect is that Martin Lindstrom, a neuromarketing specialist and a brand creator himself, a person that is paid to create marketing strategies and to persuade consumers, is opening the black box of marketing and shares with the reader some of his most precious secrets. A rhetorical question still remains: being aware of all these marketing strategies, are we going to buy differently?

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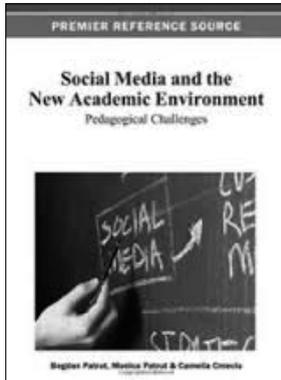
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Social Media and the New Academic Environment: Pedagogical Challenges

Coordinators: Bogdan Pătruț / Monica Pătruț / Camelia Cmeciu

Publisher: IGI Global



Although Social Media has a very short history, the number of articles dedicated to this topic is enormous. Its continuous growth in importance can be drawn from the huge amount of literature and authors who relate to it.

Digital literacy for effective communication in the new academic environment, as Vasilescu (et al.) express in the title of their paper, is extremely important for nowadays students and teachers as well. I strongly agree with the authors arguing that “the fixity of knowledge – the accumulation of fixed elements of knowledge – no longer meets the requirements of nowadays society. The capacity of change, adaptation, and constant updating of these elements according to individual needs, but also to the needs of various contexts of knowledge, must be used as a prerequisite of social integration for the graduate [and not only]. Education stepped into the era of deep reforms based on new concepts: student-centered learning, informal education, and personal learning environment” (p.368). Transversal competencies, such as autonomy and responsibility, social networking and personal and professional development, along with the professional ones, enable not only students, but teachers too, with the necessary instruments for better knowledge production and distribution and at the same time allow them to experience new personal interaction settings.

Social Media and the New Academic Environment: Pedagogical Challenges started as an initiative of three young Romanian professors, Bogdan and Monica Pătruț, from the Vasile Alecsandri University of Bacău and Camelia Cmeciu, from Danubius University of Galați and ended published by the reborned IGI Global. As the editors abovementioned preface it: “Based on the idea that social media radically transforms the environment in which university students and professors interact, in the teaching-learning process, but also in the field of scientific research, the book aims at presenting the latest achievements, studies, discoveries, national practices related to social media use in the academic environment.” (editors’ note, p. XIX)

Social Media and the New Academic Environment: Pedagogical Challenges is therefore a collection of research papers written by a group of over forty senior and junior researchers coming from universities in twelve countries: Romania, Ireland,

USA, Finland, Canada, United Kingdom, Spain, Portugal, Italy, Austria, Malaysia or Ukraine. Approaching both theoretical and practical aspect of social media usage in the educational environment, the book is similar to conference tomes as it shows different perspectives of authors with an extremely diverse educational background (mainly Computer Science, Political Science, Communication Science, Biology, Education, Psychology or Sociology, to mention just a few) and using very different research methodologies. With contributors belonging to such various cultural and educational environments, "the book provides relevant theoretical frameworks and the latest research on social media challenges in the educational context" (publishers' summary).

The book started as an intention to address some important questions regarding the implications of social media's wide impact on higher education. Are we witnessing today a new pedagogical paradigm? Can we talk about Pedagogy 2.0 or is it all just an embellishment of the traditional educational paradigm? Do social media have real implications in the educational field, or are they just a set of tools meant to entertain the participants? Are there any clear cases of successful use of social media in higher education? If yes, then what are the results?

Given the diversity of angles authors approach the subject, I feel the need to make a brief presentation of the books' structure. It comprises works distributed into four sections.

The first section approaches "Pedagogical Challenges of Social Media in Academia" in four papers dealing with a new social pedagogy. As Holland and Judge say: "By its very nature, and in the right hands, Web 2.0 technology has the capacity to transform existing pedagogic practices in higher education by creating a teaching and learning environment that supports participation, interactivity, communication and the development of learning communities where students can share and co-construct knowledge with each other and their instructors" (p. 18).

"Social Media as a Means for Current Education", the second section of the book, focuses on the integration of social media into the existing educational settings and the challenges it rises, such as: social media's impact on the development of communities of practice and social development in distance education courses, framing non-formal education through CSR 2.0 edutainment, and the need for adaptation of social media courses to the constant changes in industry and consultancy practices.

Section three includes a number of case studies of "National Practices of Social Media in Higher Education" from USA, Romania, Spain, Portugal, Malaysia and Singapore and have the power to give the reader a broad perspective on similarities and differences between countries with different educational systems and cultural traditions.

The last section of the book is entitled “The Impact of Social Media technologies on the Academic Environment” and focuses on new social media technologies, such as micro-blogging or augmented reality, used by teachers in their effort to make the shift from the old style of teaching-learning process to a new model of student-teacher interaction.

The book allows the reader to relate to a fairly wide range of topics associated to social media. Withal, each of the book’s twenty chapters introduces new concepts (such as Augmented Reality, edutainment, participatory media or blended-learning) and several theoretical perspectives that can inspire future research.

One of the main conclusions one can draw from this book is that social media’s influence on the academic environment is a phenomenon worth intensive researching in the future as it can be approached from at least three distinct perspectives (as identified by Suter, Alexander and Kaplan, 2005, p. 48): “ Social software as a tool (for augmenting human social and collaborative abilities), as a medium (for facilitating social connection and information interchange), and as an ecology (for enabling a ‘system of people, practices, values and technologies in a particular local environment’.”

All in all, I consider *Social Media and the New Academic Environment: Pedagogical Challenges* to be a consistent book, with up-to-date and well documented information, involving a tremendous amount of work (over 800 references and empirical research methodology).

The book also provides not only theoretical and practical social media approaches, but also key terms’ definitions at the end of each chapter, therefore being a useful tool for students too. Also, the academic level of research involved in the studies can be used as very good examples for all students, Master’s and Doctoral candidates as well as for young researchers.

Being fully convinced of the usefulness of this book, I strongly recommend it to all those in search of a deeper understanding of how social media works and how it influences higher education today.

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Basic Principles of Brand Management

Author: Cosmin Irimieș

Publisher: Accent, 2013



Personal brand, brand management...extremely fashionable and overused terms that have lost most of their real meaning and significance due to their forced entrance into the common, day to day language. The majority of us use these terms and so many more related without even thinking about the more profound significance they might have. And this is where the book “Basic Principles of Brand Management”, written by Cosmin Irimieș, takes its strength from.

As the author himself states at the very beginning of his research, “the purpose of this book (that includes, besides new research and case studies, some reprints from articles published by the author during the last year, in trade magazines), is not by far to make an exhaustive or even comprehensive analysis of the brand management process or of the brand history, but to introduce basic notions that may lead to a more thorough approach of this discipline”. (Irimieș, p. 8)

Indeed, the real and obvious purpose of the book is to enlighten some of the hidden, inner values of terms such as branding, personal brand, brand management, brand creation, adding real value to terms that have lost it by getting too common.

Very easy to follow, the narrative speech leads the reader into the scientific field of brand management, without for one moment assuming that any of the related notions is known by default and must not be insisted upon. Thus, the author starts by justifying his scientific work through some succinct introductory considerations, only to continue with a clear and organized approach.

The presentation of the basic notions of the field of brand management could not overlook various definitions and the historical evolution of the term “brand” as well as essential aspects related to brand architecture that is the step by step creation and nurture of a specific brand as “branding started disconnecting itself from other communication services and transformed itself into truly a scientific process, with specific processes and agencies to carry them out” (Irimieș, p. 12)

Brand creation and development would be though incomplete and unsuccessful without knowing the personal characteristics of different types of brand, and this must be the reason why the author gives great importance and space also to brand classification. He presents the basic features of corporate brands, institutional brands and last, but not least, consumer brands.

As one of the most important in modern industry of branding, the institutional branding is granted thorough and expanded research, as the author of the book

approaches it in its various forms of being: university/ academic branding, location branding or public services' branding.

As I previously stated, the narrative structure is very accessible, as it does not only presents scientific facts, but it also offers real and relevant example of brand management.

One of the most important parts of the book obviously refers to one of the most important modern communication means: the Internet and the online branding. "Development of the Internet and its evolution from a simple way to send messages to the main mean of communication, has had a major influence on how brands are created and promoted, and how the activity of branding with all that it encompasses is structured, from creation, communication and promotion, to assessment of its impact on brands". (Irimieş, p. 49) The author supports his thesis with the results of different scientific studies related to the evolution of the Internet, social web, electronic brand promotion, online advertising and so on. All these aspects converge to an extremely relevant example of Internet-based brand management: the 2008 and 2012 electoral campaigns of Barack Obama, „the first U.S. presidential candidate to use the Internet as a major communication tool for his campaign, his success making the online branding one of the basic tools for any electoral campaign" (Research by Pew Research Center: The Internet's Role in Campaign).

The research approaches the field of brand valuation with its complex methodologies (economic income approach, market comparable approach, cost approach) also analyzing the brand valuation in Romania, a still immature brand market with low transparency and scarce activity in this area.

Taking into consideration all the above, we can deffinitely say that „Basic Principles of Brand Management" is a reseasch that could and should be used as premise for a future extended scientific approach.

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