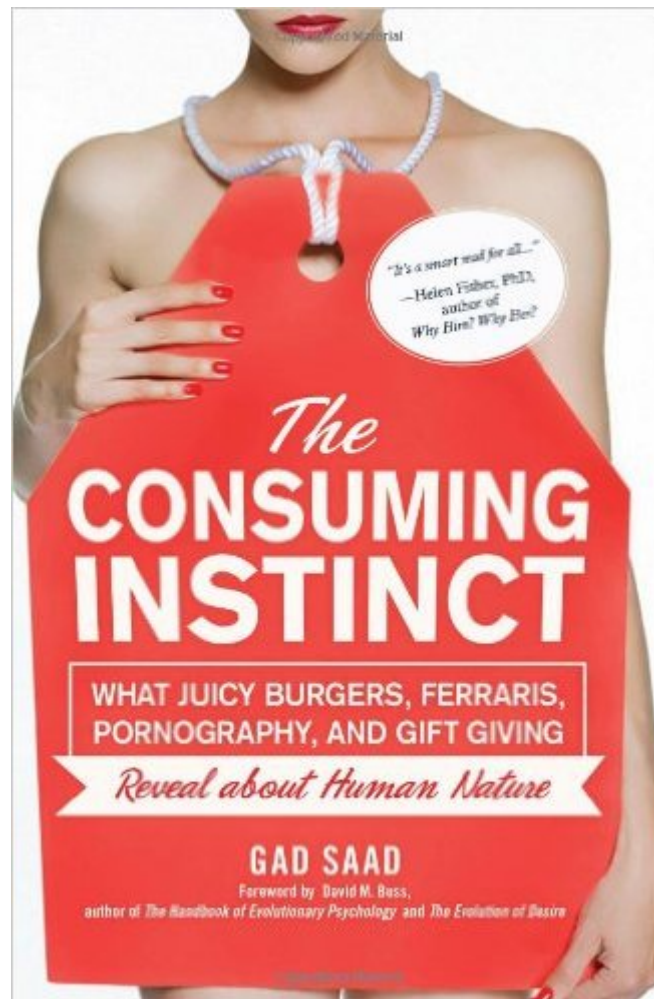


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The Consuming Instinct: What Juicy Burgers, Ferraris, Pornography, And Gift Giving Reveal About Human Nature



Synopsis

In this highly informative and entertaining book, the founder of the vibrant new field of evolutionary consumption illuminates the relevance of our biological heritage to our daily lives as consumers. While culture is important, the author shows that innate evolutionary forces deeply influence the foods we eat, the gifts we offer, the cosmetics and clothing styles we choose to make ourselves more attractive to potential mates, and even the cultural products that stimulate our imaginations (such as art, music, and religion). The book demonstrates that most acts of consumption can be mapped onto four key Darwinian drives—namely, survival (we prefer foods high in calories); reproduction (we use products as sexual signals); kin selection (we naturally exchange gifts with family members); and reciprocal altruism (we enjoy offering gifts to close friends). The author further highlights the analogous behaviors that exist between human consumers and a wide range of animals. For anyone interested in the biological basis of human behavior or simply in what makes consumers tick—marketing professionals, advertisers, psychology mavens, and consumers themselves—this is a fascinating read.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The aphorist, Aaron Haspel, once wrote: “Once you see human interaction as a contest to signal mating fitness, you never see it as anything else.” That’s both interesting and true, but for the purposes of this review, I’m going to need to paint with a broader brush: once you see all aspects of human existence as a product of evolution, you never see them as anything else.

Modern-day consumerism is no exception and it's the subject of Gad Saad's fantastic book *The Consuming Instinct*. Saad is a professor of marketing at Concordia University and writes a popular blog at Psychology Today called *Homo Consumericus*. Using various parts of evolutionary theory, Saad dissects modern-day consumer behavior with applaudable gusto. Parts of his analysis are sure to be offensive to some, which suggests to me that he's on to something. As a general rule of thumb, if some people are strongly offended by an idea, it's worth giving it special consideration. This is because many truths simply aren't all that pleasant. Many people respond to these types of books with knee-jerk reactions full of personal attacks and hatred because they confuse positive statements with normative ones. I would urge these people to consider that explaining how things are says nothing about how they ought to be. The subtitle of the book is *What Juicy Burgers, Ferraris, Pornography, and Gift Giving Reveal About Human Nature*. Not surprisingly, they reveal quite a bit. These four items speak to the four Darwinian pursuits that underlie human existence: survival, reproduction, kin selection, and reciprocity.

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