Book Reviews

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In *Book Reviews*, we review an extensive and diverse range of books. They cover theory and applications in operations research, statistics, management science, econometrics, mathematics, computers, and information systems. In addition, we include books in other fields that emphasize technical applications. For more information about book reviews, please send an e-mail to interfacesbookreviews@gmail.com.

The authors or editors of books that we review in this issue are J. Scott Armstrong, Javier Faulin, Angel A. Juan, Sebastián Martorell, and José Emmanuel Ramírez-Márquez. The outgoing book reviews editor, Benjamin Lev, handled the reviews in this issue.

ARMSTRONG, J. SCOTT. 2010. *Persuasive Advertising: Evidence-Based Principles*. Palgrave-Macmillan, New York. 386 pp. $57.37.

Persuasive Advertising is a handbook on effective advertising. It is the practical product of J. Scott Armstrong's uniquely comprehensive investigation of both scientific and corporate advertising research. This book targets all those who create advertisements and their constituents, from clients looking to evaluate the competence of advertising firms to the general public whose beliefs and choices ads influence. In short, it is a book for anyone who wants to understand advertising's quality and impact. In another era, it might have been titled *The Compleat Advertiser*. In ours, it meets the highest standard to which contemporary knowledge claims are held: its evidence-based conclusions (Armstrong refers to them as "principles") are based upon systematic reviews of the deep evidence base on advertising. This body of evidence includes its sister disciplines, marketing and psychology, particularly the research on persuasion and social influence. Its title states exactly what the book contains.

The 194 evidence-based *Persuasive Advertising* principles draw upon systematic reviews of research relevant to specific advertising decisions and problems. A systematic review is the identification, evaluation, and synthesis of all quality research relevant to a specific practice question. Such "studies of studies" are the foundation of evidence-based medicine and

are increasingly undertaken in many other professions, including nursing, criminal justice, education, and psychology. Management, particularly management education, has recently begun to use systematic reviews (Briner et al. 2009, Salipante and Smith 2011). In this context, *Persuasive Advertising* is a resource whose time has come.

Translating evidence into action is not always easy. Evidence might not readily provide a practical answer. However, acting without knowing the evidence perpetuates the underuse of effective practices and the overuse of ineffective ones. Armstrong is aware that it is easy to overgeneralize from research findings. He has taken pains to provide the conditions of use that help make principles appropriate and actionable (e.g., information should be organized differently for audiences with different levels of experience with the advertised product). This feature alone separates *Persuasive Advertising* from other one-size-fits-all books by media gurus.

A challenge for any evidence-based guide for practice is to be user friendly—more a practical tool than research summary. The book's user-friendly structure follows what Armstrong terms a *persuasion principles map*. This map organizes the principles by topics relevant to advertising's goals, design, and evaluation. Each topic in turn is divided into categories relevant to advertising-related decisions. For example, advertising's goals are addressed in the *strategy* category, which presents principles guiding effective use of topics such as information (and its subtopics,

benefits, news, product, price, and distribution) and influence (e.g., reasons, social proof, scarcity, attribution). Another category, *general tactics*, addresses design concerns, covering such topics as resistance, message, acceptance, and attention, with each subdivided by specific types of design features. The range of advertising is as broad as the research literature, including tactics appropriate for still media (e.g., print, photos, Internet) or to motion media (e.g., film, television, Internet).

Armstrong, a Wharton professor, spent the better part of two decades compiling the evidence on which this book is based. His efforts came to fruition through his recent collaboration with Gerry Lukeman, formerly of IPSOS-ASI, and Sandeep Patnaik, research director at Gallup and Robinson, both acknowledged as key contributors on the title page. This team mobilized the efforts of over 80 people who identified relevant research, analyzed original data, and contacted researchers to verify the accuracy of its conclusions. It is the first of its kind in marketing and advertising, a well-vetted comprehensive set of actionable principles based on the evidence provided by 3,000 empirical studies and 50 books.

Armstrong organizes the book to make it easy for practitioners to identify how particular tactics are useful for different purposes, product types, and media. He and his team reviewed business applications to evaluate where and how the book's principles apply. In specifying conditions for applying principles, Armstrong emphasizes the basic issues that organizations need to consider: What are the goals for the advertising? How are stakeholders, including stockholders, suppliers, employees, retailers, customers, and the local community, likely to be affected by the ad? What are the stakeholders' ultimate objectives? How does the kind of product, such as commercial or prosocial, affect its advertising effectiveness? What is the target market? The fundamental focus in this treatment of advertising practice is its impact on long-term organizational objectives.

I highly recommend this book to marketing and advertising professionals, educators, and researchers in these fields, and indeed anyone seeking to understand the myriad ways advertising affects our behaviors and choices. I realize now that I need to change my opening sentence. *Persuasive Advertising* is *the* handbook on effective advertising.

References

Briner, R., D. Denyer, D. M. Rousseau. 2009. Evidence-based management: Concept clean-up time? *Acad. Management Perspectives* **23**(4) 19–32.

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