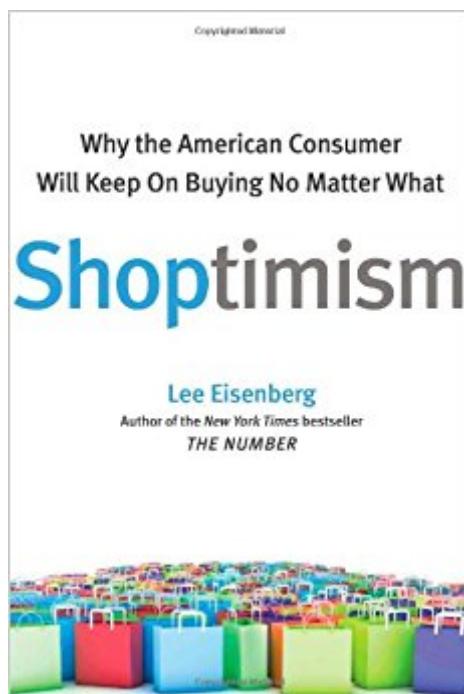


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Shoptimism: Why The American Consumer Will Keep On Buying No Matter What



Synopsis

In this smart, engaging book, Lee Eisenberg, best-selling author of *The Number: A Completely Different Way to Think about the Rest of Your Life*, leads us on a provocative and entertaining tour of America's love/hate affair with shopping, a pursuit that, even in hard times, remains a true national pastime. Why do we shop and buy the way we do? In a work that will explain much about the American character, Eisenberg chronicles the dynamics of selling and buying from almost every angle. Neither a cheerleader for consumption nor an anti-consumerist scold, he explores with boundless curiosity the vast machinery aimed at inducing us to purchase everything from hair mousse to a little black dress. He leads us, with understated humor, into the broad universe of marketing, retailing, advertising, and consumer and scientific research--an arsenal of powerful forces that combine to form what he calls "The Sell Side." Through the rest of the book, Eisenberg leads us through the "Buy Side" -- a journey directly into our own hearts and minds, asking among other questions: What are we really looking for when we buy? Why are we alternately excited, guilt-ridden, satisfied, disappointed, and recklessly impulsive? What are our biases, need for status, impulses to self-express, that lead us individually to buy what we buy? Are you a classic buyer (your head wants to do the right thing), or a romantic buyer (your heart just wants to have fun)? How do men and women differ in their attitudes towards shopping, and does the old cliche -- "Women shop, men buy" -- apply any longer? Of special interest are the author's findings on the subject of *What Makes a Good Buy?* We all purchase things that we sooner or later regret, but what are the guidelines for making purchases that we'll never regret? What, for instance, defines the perfect gift? Brimming with wit and surprise, *Shoptimism* will be delightful and instructive reading for anyone with a credit card and a healthy curiosity about American culture, through good times and bad. For here, in one vivid journey, is a memorable, panoramic portrait of our everyday self-delusions, desires, and dreams.

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Customer Reviews

Eisenberg (The Number) reveals the mechanisms of manufacturing needs and wants in this book that explores every facet of retail consumption, from advertising to behavioral marketing, from malls to Internet communities. The author presents his own family's consumption habits as a litmus test, which, while providing context, effectively sidelines the experiences of those who do not embrace consumerism with the same fervor. Dividing the retail landscape into Buy and Sell, Eisenberg provides a cornucopia of consumption trends, brain scans indicating beer preferences, zip-code-based lifestyle data, psychographic information, blogs and buzz measurement. Searching for a Unified Theory of Buying, the author dismisses analysts such as Marx for misunderstanding needs and Schor for scolding consumers. Entertaining the possibilities of Brand Communities, the author superficially considers Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital, settling finally on a typology of Romantic and Classic buyers. Although a thorough compendium of today's marketplace, the author's friendly come along with me tone sometimes devolves into glibness, and in accepting conditions as is, his observations might prove as fleeting as buyer's remorse. (Nov.)

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"As a so-called advertising guru for the past fifty years, I found Shoptimism to be brimming over with wit and sly insight into the darker recesses of the consumer's soul." -- George Lois, member, Art Directors Club Hall of Fame, and pioneer of advertising's Creative Revolution

This book has some interesting insights but it is not told from the perspective of someone who really loves to shop therefore it's more analytical vs expressing the passion that many shoppers have and what they get out of shopping, both the good and the bad. I got a little bored with some of the chapters. It would probably be better if it was shortened down. I finished just being glad I actually got through the book since I paid for it but it did not leave a lasting impression on me.

I've been dipping into this book on my Kindle whenever I have a few minutes, with a few longer

sessions including one where I went back and highlighted here and there to try to latch onto some ideas I might remember after I finish the book. I've enjoyed the experience, similar to my enjoyment of magazine articles on the plane or while waiting at the doctor's office, which I guess reflects the author's background as a magazine editor. It's interesting and entertaining and there are some little gems scattered around, like the comment that Target's extensive training program for its workers doesn't include a single bit of product knowledge. I don't like to quibble about the lack of substance; if it had more substance and less slickness I might very well have quit reading and moved on to something more fun. I'm a little over halfway through, maybe there's some insight waiting for me in the last chapters. (Like I said, I'm reading on the Kindle, so haven't flipped ahead.)

Imagine you spent two years researching a book about why we shop. Imagine you spoke to researchers, retailers, advertisers, consumers. Imagine you looked at shopping from both sides now — from buy and sell, from give and take. And then, somehow, as you were writing it, the world economy collapsed and everything you'd done was turned upside down. Welcome to Lee Eisenberg's world. You know Lee Eisenberg. Author of *The Number*, Executive Editor at Esquire, Vice-President and Creative Director at Land's End, Co-Inventor of Rotisserie Baseball. Man — man. Guy — guy. Starting in 2007, Eisenberg dove deep into the belly of the beast to answer the question that the anthropologist Mary Douglas asks in her book *World of Goods*: "Why do people want goods?" Or, to state it in the parlance of early 21st century America, "Why do we want these goods instead of those goods and what the hell can we do about it?" Eisenberg divides his savage journey into (to read the rest of this review, please visit [...]

Shoptimism is another title that I happened to grab from the shelf of my own bookstore, making me a small dusty part of the sell-side equation, but more on that later... *Shop...* is written well, almost conversationally, and rarely delves into dry fact regurgitation or scholarly prose. The author describes his post at Land's End, giving him some measure of professional insight. Eisenberg, for book research, also had a sting at Target, albeit one lasting under a couple months. I would have liked to see that last a bit longer but kudos anyway. However, while stylistically *Shoptimism* is pleasing, we probably have 250 pages of material stretched out into just over 300. Also, the bit about gift-giving seemed a tacked on afterward. And forgive me for saying but I don't know that the title is appropriate. I had expected more of a treatise on how the consumer continues to spend in

tighter economic times in our very consumer based culture, going back to the Great Depression at the very least. While this is a small part of the text, it is more a work on the sell side versus the buy side. Who is Shoptimism for? I have no idea really...as other reviewers have said, those that use this information professionally or educationally have a larger wealth of material already. Does it contain strategy for the sell side? Some...but that is not the overall theme either. As I mentioned, I do inhabit a very small corner of the sell side world, but the tips and tricks I may have gleaned from this book are either obvious or common sense. And incidentally, my sell side strategy is basically leave the customer alone, I don't like to be bothered so I'm not going to bother them. Do I recommend buying and reading this? Sure...but you would need to be fairly interested in the sell side buy side world.

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