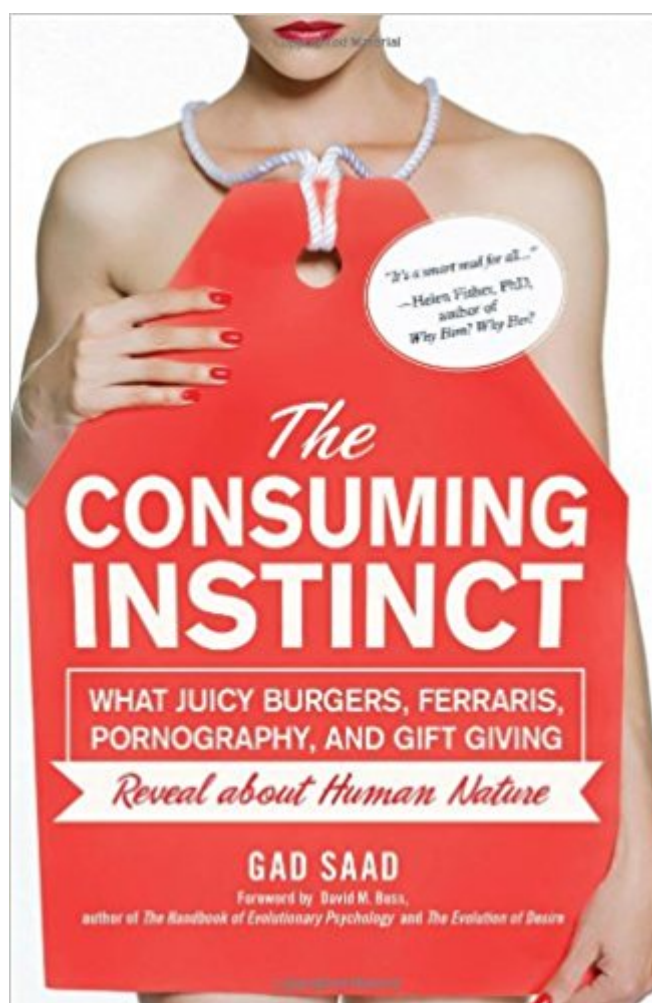


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# The Consuming Instinct: What Juicy Burgers, Ferraris, Pornography, And Gift Giving Reveal About Human Nature



## 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

"What's your guilty pleasure? Junk food? Fast cars? Champagne? To shop until you drop? What makes consumers tick? Psychologist Gad Saad writes of the innate needs, preferences, and drives that spur many of our most treasured appetites and behaviors—all soft-wired into the human brain in deep history for purposes of survival and reproduction. We are natural born consumers. And

as Saad elegantly examines our daily rituals and tastes (and he gives us troves of fascinating data from around the world), he brings our common human heritage to life. I'll never look at my high-heeled shoes or a buffet the same way again. It's a smart read for all who sell, all who buy, and all who really want to understand others and themselves. You may even come away thinking: I consume, therefore I am." --Helen Fisher, PhD, Biological Anthropologist, Rutgers University and author of *Why Him? Why Her?* "I urge you to consume *The Consuming Instinct*! Using cogent examples from popular culture deftly mixed with an expert's grasp of modern evolutionary biology, Dr. Saad shows how our biology underlies our consumer choices. Like nothing else on the market today, it will help you understand why we purchase and pay attention as we do. Indeed, never has science for the lay-person been presented more cogently or accessibly when it comes to our daily economic activities." --David P. Barash, professor of psychology, University of Washington and co-author of *Payback: Why We Retaliate, Redirect Aggression and Take Revenge* "Juicy burgers, Ferraris, pornography, and gift giving are the stuff of human nature. Evolutionary psychologist Gad Saad tells us just how and why, and much more, in *The Consuming Instinct*. With wit, charm, and crystal clarity, Saad lays bare the evolutionary underpinnings of consumerism." --Todd K. Shackelford, Ph.D., professor and Chair of Psychology, Oakland University, editor, *Evolutionary Psychology* (epjournal.net) "What the jacket does not say is just how entertaining, enlightening and informative this book is as Saad reveals the reasons behind consumers' preferences for fat burgers, fancy cars and the trendiest fashions. By putting forward the idea of evolutionary economics, Saad opens up new concepts in marketing as well as a much clearer understanding of why we respond to certain products the way we do. For those curious about the reasons people spend their hard-earned money on the things they do, presented in an understandable format then look no further." --Monsters and Critics

Gad Saad, Ph.D. (Montreal, Canada), a popular blogger for *Psychology Today* ("*Homo-Consumericus*"), is a professor of marketing at the John Molson School of Business at Concordia University. He holds the Concordia University Research Chair in Evolutionary Behavioral Sciences and Darwinian Consumption and is the author of *The Evolutionary Bases of Consumption*, plus numerous scientific papers.

Before reading this book I only knew of the Gad Father from his youtube channel. His book is an interesting look at the scientific reasons men and woman want what they want. His personality definitely comes through in the book and it is not a detriment. I wish it went a little deeper into the

research it seems like it was written for the layman too much, as a layman I wish it went a bit deeper. If this was designed to be an intro into Evolutionary Psychology then mission accomplished. I plan on reading more into this topic from other authors and hope this isn't his only book.

Gad Saad explains his theories of an evolutionary basis for consumer behavior. Since the evolution of the human brain mostly took place before modern civilization, the concerns, cravings, and aspirations of our hunter-gatherer ancestors out in the Paleolithic wilderness are the same ones that drive us in the wilds of the modern malls, clubs, and churches. This is backed up with meticulous notes from Gad's and others' empirical research into evolutionary psychology, consumer ethnography, behavioral finance, sociobiology, and myriad other subjects. There's an equal treatment of theory and application. For example, it's joked about and much supposed that women find men in expensive cars more attractive. It makes some sense that high status men have more resources to provide, but can it be true in our sophisticated, post-modern society? It turns out it is. Studies are presented that show women find men, any men, attractive in an expensive car. The luxury and prestige of the car is transferred to the man driving it. It's also shown that men's testosterone level increases when driving an expensive sports car as opposed to driving a regular car. Clearly there are unconscious patterns at work in consumers' minds that fit patterns that have developed long ago and are still with us. There are many other examples and presentations. One notable subject for which the author a lot of attention for is his criticism of religion and defense of atheism. There's not much more I can add to that debate, but I think Gad's own research frames the issue in surprising ways. Although he does give his thoughts about the idea of God (he obviously doesn't believe in it), the complaints, similar to other atheists and agnostics, are mostly with the practice of religion. Considering his family's experiences with religious conflicts, which he touches on in his chapter about altruism and social networks, his view is understandable. Religion is practiced by flawed people beholden to evolutionary urges, so obviously there are going to be problems, some serious. However, the same cultural and evolutionary forces that, say, shape a group to become more cohesive and conforming in times of stress also shape them to be more religious. There are desires and cravings that prompt scandalous acts, but there are also virtuous values that result in good ones. Religion may be a way to exploit our evolutionary behavior, or, just as plausible, it's a product of our evolutionary behavior. Regardless of how you feel about, it's an important topic worth considering. Another part that was of particular interest to me was his thoughts on the intersection of neuroscience and business. One imagines the purveyors of neuro-this and neuro-that consulting

some turn-of-the-century pathological illustration of the brain diagrammed with each part associated with some function. The hippocampus controls organization, the amygdala controls fear, the basal ganglia controls some other thing, etc. Fortunately, Gad puts this confusion of the-map-for-the-territory reductivism to rest. Complex systems such as human behavior and personality are much more than the sum of their parts. There isn't a magic bullet to control or program them. The best explanations to deal with them holistically are decision heuristics governed by evolutionary psychology such as what is presented in *The Consuming Instinct*. This book was enjoyable and informative. Anyone involved in selling products to consumers, studying their behavior, or even just wishing to get more insight in their own consuming habits will find this book valuable. Highly recommended.

A survey or two of our university and college professors have recently shown that -- dare I say? -- an anti-science bias against the revelations of evolutionary psychology (EP) exists among our possibly leftward-leaning academics (who, BTW, think nothing of depicting their counterparts on the right as "anti-science" for denying climate change -- as such deniers should be depicted). Prof. Saad is clearly and refreshingly unswayed by what must be intense peer pressure. Good for him!

My job has me reading lots of books on consumer behavior, and many recent ones cover the same faddish approaches, using the same anecdotes and citing the same studies. The evolutionary psych angle is new to me, and this book was a great introduction. Sometimes it felt like the author was stretching the theory a bit too far and some examples didn't quite fit, but overall the book covers a lot of novel ground quickly, is fun, and avoids that Gladwellesque longwinded structure that if you hate it, you really hate it.

I heard Gad Saad on the Joe Rogan Experience podcast a while back and wanted to check out his book. I found it quite engaging, although some of the ideas were familiar to me having studied evolutionary biology in college. Still, the perspectives are quite illuminating as to how we can be targeted by marketing. Perhaps it will awaken you to some of the hype surrounding various elements of marketing strategy and allow you to be more mindful in the future.

Very interesting. Couldn't put it down over my 10 day long vacation. had to take a few notes to do some back-tracking once I got home and research a few topics. VERY INTERESTING! I strongly recommend it to anyone with an interest in consumer behavior.

Infinitely entertaining, funny, and informative. You'll be smiling as you read each chapter, recognizing the habits and pitfalls pertaining to our insatiable consumption. Some passages are laugh out loud funny. You won't be disappointed.

I'll be getting every book this guy ever writes in the future. (on audible please ;) He is really insightful. My job is marketing, but this book is about so much more than just marketing. Loved it! PS I will re-buy this book if you put it out on audible.

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