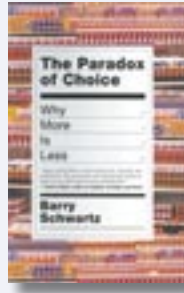


BOOKS WE ARE READING



IN A CROWDED MARKETPLACE, **AESTHETICS** IS OFTEN THE ONLY WAY TO MAKE A PRODUCT **STAND OUT**. —*THE SUBSTANCE OF STYLE*

WHY PEOPLE BUY THINGS THEY DON'T NEED: UNDERSTANDING AND PREDICTING CONSUMER BEHAVIOR,
by Pamela N. Danziger (Dearborn Trade Publishing)

Marketing expert Pamela Danziger says the “whys” of consumer behavior can’t always be neatly charted or found on the viewgraphs of your industry’s competitive analysis. Only in-depth marketing research will help companies anticipate and prepare for changes in cultural, economic, and political environments. Danziger details fourteen consumer “justifiers”—excuses people use to justify discretionary purchases—and applies these insights to new marketing strategies. “Getting It Right” vignettes feature case studies from Bulgari to Longeberger to outlet malls. Danziger also examines the current and future outlook for thirty-seven product categories of what people buy, and discusses how future trends—such as an aging, more educated, more diverse population—will affect consumer behavior.

THE PARADOX OF CHOICE: WHY MORE IS LESS, by Barry Schwartz (HarperCollins Publishers)

The average American sees about two hundred advertisements per waking hour, says social theorist and professor Barry Schwartz. The range of choices people face—in consumer products, healthcare, utilities, and even in our relationships with one another—has increased dramatically in recent years, and has left us overwhelmed. It is a symptom of the paradox of our times, Schwartz argues: awash in material abundance, people want control over the details, but also want to simplify their lives. He discusses how, when, and why consumers choose the way they do, and how much more difficult it has become to make the “right” choice, given so many options available to us.

THE SUBSTANCE OF STYLE: HOW THE RISE OF AESTHETIC VALUE IS REMAKING COMMERCE, CULTURE, AND CONSCIOUSNESS,
by Virginia Postrel (HarperCollins Publishers)

A rage for poetry in the age of Wal-Mart? Postrel, a columnist for *The New York Times*, asserts that consumers today are demanding that the products they use—and even the stores where they shop—exhibit not just usefulness and value, but a sense of style. A sensitivity to and demand for aesthetics now extends well beyond the elites; “sensory appeals are everywhere [and] they are increasingly personalized.” We visit a General Electric facility in upstate New York, for example, that is solely devoted to developing exotic colors and textures for GE products. Postrel also cites a host of items and purveyors—from iMac to Target to Starbucks—who have benefited from and played a part in this “prearticulate” revolution.