



The Persuaders: The hidden industry that wants to change your mind

James Garvey

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Every day, many people will try to change your mind, but they won't reason with you. Instead, you'll be nudged, anchored, incentivised and manipulated in barely noticeable ways. It's a profound shift in the way we interact with one another.

Philosopher James Garvey explores the hidden story of persuasion and the men and women in the business of changing our minds. From the covert PR used to start the first Gulf War to the neuromarketing of products to appeal to our unconscious minds, he reveals the dark arts practised by professional persuaders.

How did we end up with a world where beliefs are mass-produced by lobbyists and PR firms? Could Google or Facebook swing elections? Are new kinds of persuasion making us less likely to live happy, decent lives in an open, peaceful world?

Is it too late, or can we learn to listen to reason again? *The Persuaders* is a call to think again about how we think now.

The Persuaders: The hidden industry that wants to change your mind Details

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James Robinson says

informative

RobS says

Great book - add a lot of reasons to the way advertisers, politicians, companies act especially in the way they go about selling their ideas, products.

Peter says

This raises some very very complex problems that strike at the heart at the very feasibility of democracy. Questions of choice and what constitutes freedom will be left lingering after finishing this book, and it's only the tip of the iceberg on the subject of human malleability and the exploitation and capitalization upon our natural human cognitive weaknesses. This should be required reading for anyone interested in understanding one the main and criminally under emphasized subjects contributing to our country and world as is. Read it.

Marjorie says

This book makes one review their critical thinking skills. I like how he divided the chapters into various ways we can be manipulated and ways to think through these "scams". He also has a chapter on the fact that we have lost the ability to debate. When I went to school everyone was taught debating skills. I wonder now if the schools offer it as choice on the curriculum but not mandatory.

Richard Block says

Always Irrational

James Garvey's account of modern persuasive techniques is not persuasive. Though he elaborates these practices well, and the book is very informative, he has an academic's repulsion at human nature and how malleable it is. You know you're in trouble from the premise. As a philosopher, he is a champion of reason, but is shocked by how little reason affects people nowadays. We have been highjacked, don't you know, by a veritable army of hidden persuaders who want to short-circuit your reason and influence you to do things you may not want to do.

Garvey hates the modern world with all its intrusions and seems to think we are heading straight to non-rational hell. All I can say is, where do you think we've been? I mean, c'mon - religion - rational, right? All

those wonderful St. Augustine reasons for why our fate is wrapped up with Jesus. The perfectly rational Roman Empire? Home of murder, torture, crucifixion, empire, slavery, etc. Or perhaps the British Empire? More slavery, racism, eugenics, coolies, etc. I'm afraid the modern world, which he despises for its consumerism, is less violent, more rational, and much more progressive than the less modern world. He should read the UN Progress on Goals (eliminating poverty and hunger, reducing disease, etc) which has been remarkably successful in the last 20 years. Perhaps Pinker's *The Better Angels of Our Nature*, which shows a profound collapse in violence in the last 100 years.

I'm afraid he is a *Guardian* reading, progress denying moaner who can't stand the fact that academic reasoning appears obsolete even to him. That he has only recently discovered Behavioural Economics and modern marketing shows what an ostrich he is. And his cure? Teach Aristotle again! Fight the intrusion. New, prescriptive legislation. I mean. c'mon. It begins as a useful survey and collapses into a polemic about loss of freedom. Wake up James - we were NEVER rational and never will be.

Akin says

Erudite and reasoned, but loses its way after a while, I feel. The fault, essentially, is that the book strays beyond its brief - describing the challenge posed to society by the persuasion industry - into suggesting remedies. Which, sadly, are vague bordering on ineffectual. (Fwiw, I'd argue for a combination of existential philosophy literacy and Dewey problem-solving educational curriculum - in short, free thinking. But it is much easier to say it than to do it.)

The sections about Facebook, Google and elections are unintentionally hilarious - and, incidentally, a marker that we still have no idea what 'democracy' is up against, given that the allegations levelled against the Russia are (a) very much at the lower end of the scale, and (b) only marginally less elegant than what has been tried by/in other countries in the past.

Matt Hunt says

Really interesting and engaging all the way through. Get the balance of information and complexity and interest pretty much spot on.

Andrea Bergia says

Great book, absolutely frightening.

Delia says

I will never shop the same, watch ads the same, sign a petition or listen to a politician without questioning. This book is championing the need to be a critical thinker always. Highly recommended. This book is entertaining, enlightening and frightening.

Jasmyne says

I didn't find this book the easiest of reads, but the content itself was interesting, and really scary.

My brain hurts when I think about all of this too much, but then I think, how can I not think about it.

I honestly don't know what is real anymore, and this book will not help me feel anymore secure in my thoughts!

Tom Roth says

Very interesting -but also a bit scary- book. This book helps you to understand how you are being influenced every day, and how irrational most of our choices are. Hopefully, being aware of these methods helps with being less susceptible to it.

Snoakes says

Thoroughly fascinating and totally terrifying. If you've ever wondered how the hell we ended up in the post-truth world we inhabit today, this is a good introduction.

We are constantly manipulated in our everyday lives. Whether the ability to reason is something we've lost, or something we've never really had, being at least vaguely aware of the methods used to make us spend our money or cast our votes gives us some small defence against them.

Essential reading.
