

Book review: *Small Data: The Tiny Clues That Uncover Huge Trends* by Martin Lindstrom

Reviewer: Dr Brendan Meagher

Small Data: The Tiny Clues That Uncover Huge Trends is an easy and enjoyable read that gives insight into the work of a man who has made a career out of observing people and uncovering trends around the world. The limitations of big data (finding correlations in enormous amounts of data) are outlined and the advantages of small data (finding causation) are shown through a wide variety of real life examples in different cultures.

Author Martin Lindstrom draws on his many years travelling the world as a branding consultant for a range of large and multinational companies to share some of his most interesting observations. He shows how many unexpected connections are uncovered, like the link between used Adidas sneakers and the best strategic direction for the company LEGO, that are then used to create new or improved products and services.

Highlights include: how the colour preferences of grandmothers is relevant to selling breakfast cereal in India, why France is synonymous with quality food but is ranked number one in the world for consuming pre-made food, how designing a shopping centre in Saudi Arabia can help design a website targeting Russian mothers, and why the views of gay men in their 20s are relevant to creating a retail fashion business targeting teenage girls.

Let it be said the book is very light on references to research and Lindstrom frequently draws conclusions that appear questionable and go far beyond the evidence available. This can be forgiven thanks to the steady flow of thought-provoking ideas and connections drawn between such seemingly unlikely variables.

Lindstrom concludes by discussing the masks that we put on to greet the world and how arriving an hour early to a meeting can provide great insight into people that may never be observed when arriving on time. Food for thought about the masks our patients present with and how we can look beyond them.

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