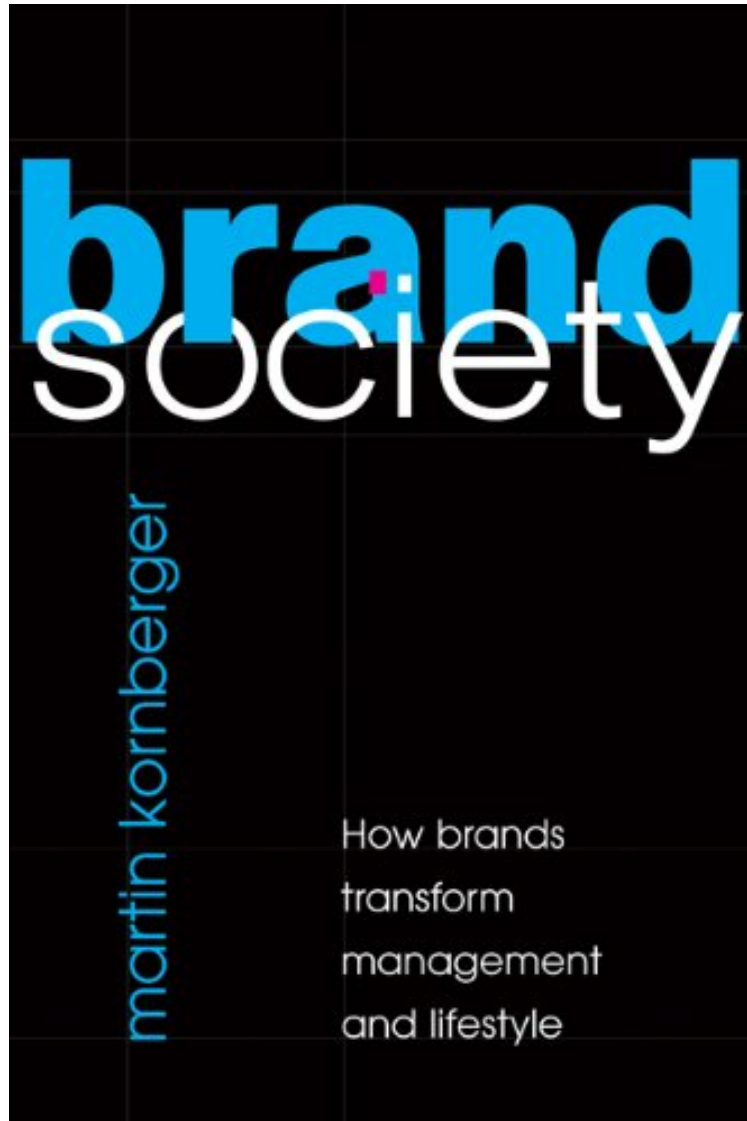


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# Brand Society: How Brands Transform Management and Lifestyle

*Martin Kornberger*

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**Martin Kornberger : Brand Society: How Brands Transform Management and Lifestyle** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Brand Society: How Brands Transform Management and Lifestyle:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Very insightful and entertainingBy Suzana P. NikiforovaFor me this book is an elegant dance of theory and practice, research and insights, education and entertainment, holistic but focused, philosophic but clear.6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. Thought provoking, holistic approach to branding.By RippleManagement books, at least the "how to" management books, tend to be simple and easy to follow. But, I suspect Kornberger would agree, that's what limits their use. They are over-simplified to the point of

uselessness. Rather, Brand Society takes an holistic approach to the subject of the prevailing nature of brands in today's world (at least the Western world). He suggests that today's brands exist without a prevailing theory to understand them or make sense of them. So what Kornberger does, after first looking at how brands transform management and organizations, is present a brand-centred conceptual map for thinking about things like politics, ethics and aesthetics. Accordingly Kornberger draws on the work of sociologists, anthropologists, philosophers (the author has a PhD in philosophy so he does this rather well), even modern art, as well as more conventional management theorists. On top of that there are a number of case examples drawn in part from the author's previous life in a brand agency. The result is a complex mixture, but fascinating for that very reason. I think his idea (a word which sounds like it should be an Apple brand) is that only if you tackle the complexities do you get to anything like a real understanding. It takes only a moment's thought to acknowledge the extent to which brands infiltrate our lives - and have done for many years but more recently the notion of branding has been pushed to the fore with companies like Virgin, Nike, Apple to name but a few. Even the anti-brand literature like Naomi Klein's No Logo have become 'brands'. The problem with brands is that they are established beyond the control of the companies who own them (think of the effects on the Burberry brand when it became the fashion of choice for any soccer thug in the UK who was serious about his chosen pastime, or the use of brand names in the latest Hip Hop music of Snoop Puffy Dog or whoever it is). This takes them beyond mere marketing - and makes them a fascinating area of study. The writing style is somewhat varied. At times some of the concepts presented, particularly when he is summarising others' research findings, can be quite heavy going, but at others Kornberger has an almost cheeky touch. "Products and brands relate to each other", he suggests, "like gynaecology and sex: one fulfils a purpose, the other mesmerizes indefinitely". Quite. These lighter touches, together with some easy-reading case studies, come as welcome respite from some of the deeper issues analysed. The book is nicely laid out and very modern-looking. But be warned, this is not for the passive reader. The subject matter is complex and, at times, dense but the reader will be rewarded for embracing this complexity and it is thought provoking stuff. Does he come up with any satisfying answers in his goal of providing an overarching theory? Well, as he acknowledges maybe not, but in the process he adds a whole level of richness to the subject. It's the sort of book that is too academic for most managers to read, but it's exactly the kind of thinking that they ought to embrace if they are to understand the complexity of the issues. A couple of minor niggles do exist however. Most annoyingly there are several very obvious spelling errors that you would hope would have been picked up in editing - particularly galling when he misspells a Shakespearean quote: 'the stuff that dreams are made off [sic]'. Ouch! Secondly, for a book with a sole author credit, the use of the editorial 'we' is annoying. As Mark Twain so eloquently opined "only presidents, editors and people with tapeworms have the right to use the editorial 'we'."

Brands are a fait accompli: they represent a mountain range of evidence in search of a theory. They are much exploited, but little explored. In this book, Martin Kornberger sets out to rectify the ratio between exploiting and exploring through sketching out a theory of the Brand Society. Most attempts to explain the role of brands focus on brands either as marketing and management tools (business perspective) or a symptoms of consumerism (sociological perspective). Brand Society combines these perspectives to show how brands have the power to transform both the organizations that develop them and the lifestyles of the individuals who consume them. This holistic approach shows how brands function as a medium between producers and consumers in a way that is rapidly transforming our economy and society. That's the bottom line of the Brand Society: brands are a new way of organizing production and managing consumption. Using an array of practical case studies from a diverse set of organizations, this book provides a fascinating account of the way in which brands influence the lives of individuals and the organizations they work in.

"An intelligent, well-informed book from someone who understands that brands and branding are intrinsic to the human condition and didn't float over to Europe from the United States on a sea of Procter Gamble detergent bubbles sometime in the 1960s...[Kornberger] also puts branding in the centre of management. This is the real strength of the book - to understand where branding comes from and place it into a contemporary corporate context...Kornberger is a clever, cultivated man who writes well. What else can you reasonably ask for?" --Wally Olins, Market Leader  
About the Author  
Martin Kornberger holds a joint appointment as Associate Professor in the School of Management and the School of Design at the University of Technology, Sydney. He is also a visiting lecturer in marketing at the University of St Andrews and co-founder of the branding agency PLAY, where he was co-director from 2003 until 2008. He is co-author, with Stewart Clegg and Tyrone Pitsis, of the management textbook *Managing and Organizations*, 2nd edition (2008).