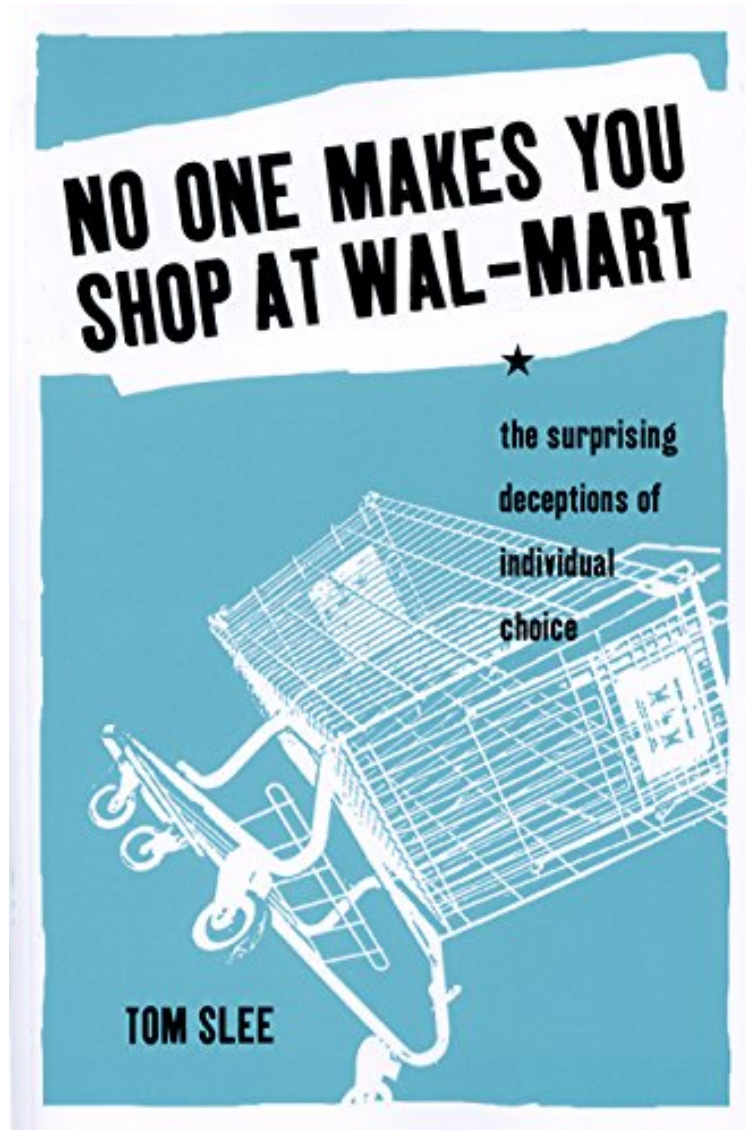


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No One Makes You Shop at Wal-Mart

Tom Slee

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Tom Slee : No One Makes You Shop at Wal-Mart before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised No One Makes You Shop at Wal-Mart:

0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Behave!By CustomerThis book makes you think about individual and collectif behavior,27 of 28 people found the following review helpful. This Book is a KeeperBy johnrobertI read a copy of this book from the public library, but now I'm buying a copy to keep, which lets you know how much I enjoyed it. It makes an excellent companion to a book like Dixit and Nabebuff's Thinking Strategically: The Competitive Edge in Business, Politics, and Everyday Life. Both of them are friendly introductions to game theory,

but Slee's book is uniquely valuable for two reasons. First, Dixit and Nalebuff want to teach you about game theory itself, and so are concerned that you learn the right terminology, know how to step backwards through a game tree, get a little sense of the historical development of the theory, and various other things that are mostly important if you want to pass a test on game theory at some point, or intend to read more advanced books later. Slee, on the other hand, wants to attack a political position and uses game theory to do it. Because he wants to use the theory rather than provide a formal introduction, his presentation eliminates jargon, technicalities, and anything else he can throw overboard to lighten the ship. The end result, for me, is a clear, unobstructed view of the raw power of the fundamental ideas of game theory as Slee puts them to work. Secondly, Slee shows game theory in a different context than usual. Most presentations of game theory, like Dixit and Nalebuff's, primarily use examples that concern rivals and competitors. Even when discussing co-operation, the emphasis is often on the possibility of betrayal and defection. Slee goes in the other direction. Because he wants to talk about how consumer choices in the marketplace impact communities, his examples tend towards situations where people are not consciously competing with each other or even thinking about each other. This change in emphasis highlights a different side of game theory, its exploration of interdependence rather than its exploration of competition. I found that to be refreshing and useful as well. I don't mean to criticize the Dixit-Nalebuff book; it's very good. But Slee's unusual approach makes his book a welcome and valuable addition, no matter what your politics are.

1 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Excellent Book. Not about Wal-Mart
By Contrarian
I bought this at a friend's recommendation and I'm very glad I did. But it wasn't what I was expecting. Very little specifically about Wal-Mart or even big box stores in general. Title is catchy but may do them a disservice by missing its best audience. The book illustrates clearly how, in many situations, well-functioning markets lead to poor results for people engaging in them. It is a debunking of the idea that we should let markets run things, like our school system via "school choice" or vouchers as is commonly argued. It shows how free choice in a market setting can lead to results that even the participants in those markets don't like. It debunks the notion that "the invisible hand" comes to the best (or even an economically efficient one). The author first illustrates how the market failures occur using very simple game theory and then argues that there are common, real-world situations where such market failures occur. I think it is an excellent rebuttal to the common assertion, which the author calls "MarketThink", that markets allocate goods efficiently and therefore we should, by and large, let them run. One of the earlier reviewers here says that he is a libertarian and that he accepts MarketThink but that he doesn't think this ideology is very prevalent in the broader political discourse. As a non-libertarian, I think the belief is all too commonly believed or, in some cases, cynically used as an argument by people/corporations to get what they want. In any case, I think MarketThink does need debunking and this book does it very well. It is kind of dry. While the book tries to be accessible to everyone, I think it would be hard to follow if you had no prior exposure to these concepts. But, I think it should be a part of every intro to Econ course. I'm sending a copy to my son's teacher.

We live in a culture of choice. But, in an age of corporate dominance, our freedom to choose has taken on new meaning. Upset with your local big box store? Object to unfair hiring practices at your neighbourhood fast food restaurant? Want to protest the opening of that new multinational coffeeshop? Vote with your feet! What if it's not that simple? In *No One Makes You Shop at Wal-Mart*, Tom Slee unpacks the implications of our fervent belief in the power of choice. Pointing out that individual choice has become the lynchpin of a neoconservative corporate ideology he calls MarketThink, he urges us to re-examine our assumptions. Slee makes use of game theory to argue that individual choice is not inherently bad. Nor is it the societal fix-all that our corporations and governments claim it is. A spirited treatise, this book will make you think about choice in a whole new way.

About the Author Tom Slee is a writer, researcher, activist, and software professional. He lives in Waterloo, Ontario.