

Unveiling Neuromarketing and Its Research Methodology

Subjects: Neurosciences

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Neuromarketing is the union of cognitive psychology, which studies mental processes, neurology and neurophysiology, which study the functioning and responses of the brain and body physiology to external stimuli, and marketing, which studies valuable exchanges, to explain marketing effects on customers' and consumers' behaviours and on buying and decision processes. It includes a set of research techniques that, by observing and evaluating how the brain and other body parts respond, avoids possible biases and provides truthful and objective information on consumer subconscious. The term "consumer neuroscience" covers academic approaches using techniques such as fMRI, Eye Tracking, or EED. The objectives of this entry are to show what neuromarketing is and what added value it brings to the study of consumer behaviour and purchase decision processes. The conclusions show a favourable future and positive attitudes towards neuromarketing.

Keywords: neuromarketing ; techniques ; metrics ; market research ; add value ; uses and attitudes ; academic research ; consumer neuroscience

After the turn of the millennium, marketing theorists and practitioners were confronted with the situation that the needs of consumers, and accordingly of advertisers, had changed with the spread of the Internet. Brand owners, i.e., advertisers, expect more accurate results from market researchers, and consumers have become more advertising-avoidant, making it much more difficult to reach them with advertiser messages ^{[1][2][3]}. In addition to more accurate data, there is a need to understand, explain, and, above all, predict the behaviour of individuals, groups, and firms toward relevant markets ^[4]. This type of prediction is becoming more accurate using available technological tools ^[5].

All of this has had a logical impact on market research practice: with the rapid development of technology, software and applications have become available and more widely used to explore consumers' needs more closely than hitherto ^{[6][7]}. This trend has given rise to a research method called neuromarketing.

Neuromarketing is a market or academic research technique that is based on the use of neuroscientific techniques to adapt them to marketing and thus try to understand the purchasing processes of consumers, trying to reach the unconscious and subconscious parts of them. The information provided by these types of techniques is very valuable and, on certain occasions, unattainable with other traditional research techniques. However, despite the undeniable added value that neuromarketing provides, its full acceptance by professionals and academicians is doubtful.

The techniques and methodologies used in market and academic research are constantly evolving, and neuromarketing is a clear reflection of this. This new technique has made it possible to answer questions that, until now, marketing researchers were not able to fully explain—why do you buy a certain product and not another, why you like one brand more than another, why do you pick up a brand in the retailer's shop and not another, why does a commercial create a more intense emotional response towards the brand than another, etc.—and, ultimately, it has allowed understanding the functioning of the consumer's subconscious and its influence on consumer behaviour and purchasing processes.

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