

How do we choose what we put in our shopping basket?

May 9 2011



Researchers at Oxford University are to study ‘neuromarketing’, a relatively new field of consumer and market research, which uses brain imaging and measurement technology to study the neural processes underlying an individual’s choice.

Neuromarketing claims to reveal how consumers assess, deliberate and choose in a variety of contexts.

According to neuromarketers this growing industry has the potential to significantly increase the effectiveness of advertising and marketing campaigns. They claim that neuromarketing will provide detailed knowledge about customer preferences and what marketing activities

will stimulate buying behavior, and make promotional campaigns more effective. It will be valuable in providing cues for the best place and prices in advertisements, and should cut the risk of marketing products that are doomed to fail. In the experts' view, instead of relying on focus groups, neuromarketing offers the promise of 'objective neurological evidence' to inform organizations' marketing campaigns.

But if neuromarketing is set to revolutionise marketing, what are the implications of this development? The study will cast light on the 'neuro-turn' in marketing by conducting fieldwork, interviews and documentary analysis. In addition a critical, historical assessment will consider and compare how different [market](#) research techniques can affect consumers and consumer behavior.

The project is led by Professor Steve Woolgar, of the Saïd Business School, and is located within a larger collaborative study of the "Neuro-turn in European Social Sciences and the Humanities: Impacts of neurosciences on economics, marketing and philosophy" (acronym: NESSHI) with researchers from other parts of Europe.

Professor Woolgar said: "This three-year project will be the first large-scale study of how emerging neurological knowledge about human decision-making is transforming the techniques of marketers and others who seek to influence the behaviour of consumers. It has far reaching implications for what we know about how humans make their choices, the role of the brain and the factors at play in everyday decisions we all take."

Dr. Tanja Schneider, researcher on the project, said: 'For a number of years, research has been focussed on brain imaging centres. This is now moving out of the laboratory and into practice. The research we are doing will cast light on what is already happening in this area, and will explore what is likely to develop in the near future. We know this will

impact society in a major way, so it is critical to understand these developments better."

Provided by Oxford University

Citation: How do we choose what we put in our shopping basket? (2011, May 9) retrieved 25 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2011-05-basket.html>

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