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The Psychology of marketing, Pt. 1

Understanding the brain's
decision-making process



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Introduction

Being a marketer is anything but boring. We venture to guess that almost all of us will agree that one of the most rewarding aspects of our vocation is being provided with the unique opportunity to discover new ways to trigger a favorable audience response—all done with well-worded copy, and a visually appealing creative.

Sure, it's fun - but heavy is the head that wears the crown. One of the most significant parts of being a marketer is having the ability to anticipate how people will react, act - or behave. Unfortunately, human behavior isn't cut and dry. It's not as rational as it appears on paper. There are an endless number of factors that can influence the way that someone responds. Many, if not most of these are completely out of our control.

A flat tire, a missed breakfast - or a traffic jam could easily change an anticipated favorable response into a 'swipe and forget'. People are inherently weird (for lack of a better term). Human quirks make it difficult for marketers to understand how to influence their consumers through content.

Lucky for us though, Psychology is on our side.

There's a reason that businesses, institutions and individuals spend thousands on their advertising efforts annually (never mind the emotional investment too). It's recorded that the average B2B business reports a \$185 000 annual marketing budget.

Why?

Apart from the simple fact that it's required - it works. Effective marketing delivers the desired results - and that is to drive an emotional response around their brand, their story - and their end goal.

In an article for Fast Company, Robert Rosenthal notes, "The vast majority of marketers aren't psychologists. But many successful marketers regularly employ psychology in appealing to consumers. Smart, skillful, honest marketers legally, ethically and respectfully use psychology to attract and engage consumers, and compel them to buy."

Based on this, it's fair to say there is a unique crossover between marketing and Psychology. And to be an effective marketer, it's pertinent to understand the way of the human psyche, and how it processes information by using a neuromarketing lens.

As such a broad topic, this book will be split into two parts - each holding as much value as the other. Here we will cover the theory while touching on the practical application for marketers. Part two, set for publication in October, will cover these topics in more detail, as well as address behavioral traits evident in education marketing.

The art of neuromarketing

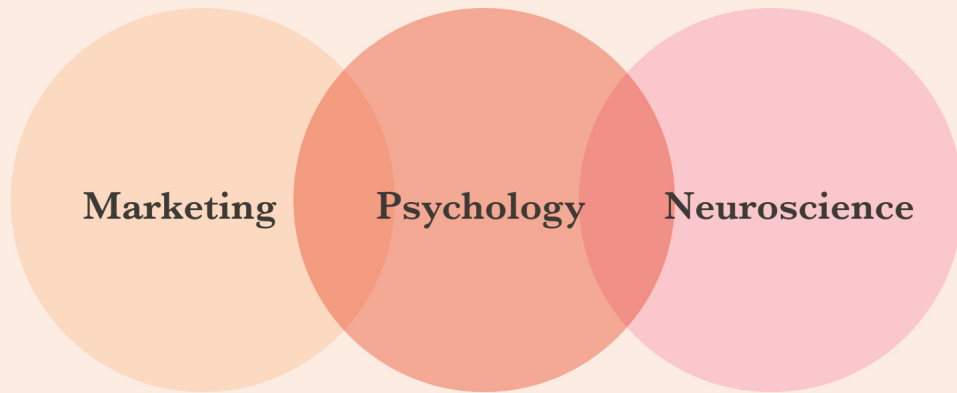


Neuromarketing is the application of neuroscience and cognitive science to marketing, says Roger Dooley, author of *Brainfluence*. Nobel Laureate Francis Crick referred to it as the astonishing hypothesis: the idea that all human feelings, thoughts, and actions—even consciousness itself—are simply the products of neural activity in the brain.

The promise of this theory for marketers is that it can lessen the ambiguity and guesswork that have previously hampered efforts to understand consumer behavior. To forecast and possibly even influence consumer behavior and decision-making, the field of neuromarketing, also referred to as consumer neuroscience, analyses the brain.

Neuromarketing, which was up until recently thought of as an extravagant "frontier science," has been strengthened by several ground-breaking research papers show it can benefit marketers.

Neuromarketing is the application of neuroscience and cognitive science to marketing. This can include market research that tries to discover customer needs, motivations, and preferences that traditional methods fail to reveal. It can include the evaluation of specific advertising, marketing, packaging, content etc. to more accurately understand how customers react at the non-conscious level. And, it can include applying the knowledge obtained from neuroscience and cognitive science research to make marketing more effective.



What is the role of neuroscience?

Some say, "If it's not actual neuroscience, it's not neuromarketing." They prefer to use the term "neuromarketing" to narrowly include only the use of consumer neuroscience tools to evaluate specific advertising methods. Early neuromarketing practitioners used tools to measure brain activity, take an EEG and fMRI, (functional magnetic resonance imaging or functional MRI measures brain activity by detecting changes associated with blood flow.) for example.

This limited definition breaks down a bit, though, since today some of the tools that are part of many consumer neuroscience studies, like facial coding, eye tracking, and implicit testing, are behavioral. Other common tools in the consumer neuroscience space measure biometric data like heart rate and galvanic skin response, which don't directly measure brain or neural activity.

Now, of course, this is great in theory - right? But naturally, consumers won't always explicitly describe their preferences, and they won't jump at the opportunity to detail their decision-making process. They might also not jump at the opportunity to be connected to a machine while making a decision. This might be in part because they aren't quite sure of it either.

Here, it is crucial to remember the idiosyncrasies of what it means to be human.

Sure, decisions can be summed up as going from, "I have a problem", to "what are the potential solutions", all the way to, "Eureka - this product, or service is the solution to my problem - a decision made!". Decision-making is not a linear process. Meaning, that it is subject to external factors. A decision to enroll in an online course might be easy for some - while it could be incredibly difficult for others.

Think of it this way.

Sarah is a 28-year-old female, who lives in Liverpool. She began working part-time jobs at the age of 16, just so that she could contribute to her family's income. She studies part-time but has had to put her degree on hold because she can't keep up with the payments and she doesn't qualify for a sponsorship or a bursary. Recently, Sarah, who shares a 2-bedroom apartment with 4 friends in a similar situation as hers, has come into a large amount of money. She is faced with a decision, and it's one that she won't take lightly. Does she use the money to complete her degree? Or does she use the money to buy a home, and pay off some debt? Both decisions have the potential to change her life.

Now for someone like Sarah, the decision that she faces is in no way an easy one. If she chooses to use the money to complete her studies, she will likely graduate, and fall in line for employment. This would in some way or another guarantee her future, yes? If she chose to use the money to secure living space, and maybe pay off some debts - she would be reducing the amount of short-term anxiety that she faces.

How would she decide?

Let's replicate the scenario - but change a few details. This time, it is Daniel, also 28, who has come into a large amount of money. Daniel comes from an upper-middle-class family. His needs have always been met, and his education is paid for, as is his studio apartment in York. For Daniel, the decision-making process would differ greatly. Should he invest the money, buy a car - or travel the world?

Put simply, these two scenarios represent opposites of the scale - and of course are hyperbole of a standard decision.

The point is that the process that each person would follow to reach their decision would be completely personal - and completely dependent on their lifestyle, and circumstances.



Brace yourself - we're about to get technical.

Numerous brain regions have been identified by researchers as having a role in decision-making. (Walton, Devlin and Rushworth, 2022) These are the orbitofrontal cortex, ventromedial prefrontal cortex, and anterior cingulate cortex (ACC). No need to take notes or remember the names, they aren't that important for our purpose here. What's noteworthy is how they behave. Depending on whether they were given instructions or had free will, the study participants' brains displayed various patterns of activity. In short, when making decisions, our brain responds differently if we are following someone else's instructions - as opposed to how they would behave if they were exerting their own free will.

These factors not only affect how a decision is made but also convey the level of confidence that goes along with it. The handling of what is referred to as reinforcement information appears to be a responsibility of the ACC. When you take action, look at the result, and change your behavior moving forward. Another study discovered that ACC impairment makes it challenging to gather and apply reinforcing information to direct decision-making. (Kennerley et al., 2022)

Emotions are a significant component in the neuroscience of decision-making. Although we would all like to believe that we make sensible decisions every time, the data tends to paint a different picture. For example, studies have shown that fearful people are more likely to make pessimistic judgments of a future event, in contrast to angry people who were more likely to present with an optimistic judgement. (Lerner and Keltner, 2022)



Put simply, if you find yourself cornered, anxious - scared to your core, you're very likely going to feel negative emotions regarding what is about to happen next. Take a job loss as an example. If you're an anxious person already, losing your source of income in a highly volatile job market is bound to ignite a slew of fear-related emotions - and those emotions will at some point lead you to feel negative about your future. If, however you're angered by the job loss, you may use this as motivation to succeed - even if it is just to 'stick it to the man'.

The somatic marker hypothesis states that our emotions have a significant impact on our decision-making. Somatic markers, or bodily sensations connected to emotions like nausea and disgust or a fast heartbeat and anxiety, serve as signals whenever we are about to make a decision. The fight-or-flight reaction, where a certain scenario causes your heartbeat to quicken so you may make the "correct" choice to secure your survival, is one of the most obvious examples of the somatic marker hypothesis.

If this is applied to your consumer, your prospective student - or you as a consumer, then do you have free will to make a decision? Or are you just another Sarah, who might find herself making a decision based on self-preservation?

Like most things in life, decision-making differs from person to person. There are 3 typical decision-making styles.

Let's dig in!

While it can be challenging to forecast and control external influences, understanding your decision-making processes is a helpful starting step in trying to make better judgments. Understanding your decision-making process as a marketer can also benefit the way that you attempt to understand the process that your audience undertakes. It's important to remember that everyone has a unique set of cognitive styles. These change depending on the circumstances, the choice to be made, and many of the previously mentioned elements.

1. Intuitive versus rational

Your decision-making is the result of a fight between two kinds of cognitive processes. The first, called System 1, is an automatic intuitive system. The second - System 2, is a deliberately rational system. System 1 is fast, implicit, and bottom-up, while system 2 is slow, explicit, and top-down.

2. Maximizing vs. satisficing

People tend to fall under two main cognitive styles. Maximizers try to make an optimal decision, whereas satisfiers simply try to find a solution that is just good enough. As a result, maximizers usually take longer to make a decision, thinking carefully about the potential outcomes and possible consequences. They will also tend to regret their decisions more often.

3. Combinatorial vs. positional

The combinatorial style is characterized by a narrow and clearly defined material goal. We tend to use this style when the objective is clearly defined. The decision-making process is more about how we will achieve the goal rather than deciding on which goal to achieve. Conversely, we use the positional style when the goal is not as clearly defined. We make decisions to curb potential risks, protect ourselves, and create an environment where it's less likely to experience the negative effects of unexpected outcomes.

Essentially - this is a fancy way of saying that the decision-making process differs from person to person, and it is highly dependent on **external factors, personality types, and quite honestly - the time of day!**

Leveraging decision-making as a marketer

Of course, there is a framework for this! While it certainly was not designed with marketers in mind, it's a tool that we can use to help us shape our target persona development and the communication strategies that we employ.

There are several decision-making frameworks out there - we've chosen to reference the **DECIDE** framework. Designed in 2008 by Professor Kristina Guo. It's super simple to **memorize** and apply.

- **Define the problem:** Taking a step back to ensure you understand the problem should be the priority when trying to make a decision.
- **Establish the criteria:** What are the criteria if you're about to sign up for an online course? Is it price, great support, or accessibility? List all the factors you want to consider before making a decision.
- **Consider the alternatives:** Try to spend the right amount of time on this step. Too much time spent considering all the alternatives can drive to overthinking and analysis paralysis.
- **Identify the best alternative:** Weight the list of criteria you have created in the second step, and rate each of the alternatives. Then, compute the result to see which alternative makes the most sense based on your criteria.
- **Develop and implement a plan of action:** This is the action phase of decision-making. Especially if you have a maximizing thinking style, it's important to force yourself to not go back to the previous steps and to move forward with the decision.
- **Establish the criteria:** What are the criteria if you're about to sign up for an online course? Is it price, great support, or accessibility? List all the factors you want to consider before making a decision.



This is only a general outline, of course. You must also establish the ideal circumstances to promote wise decision-making for it to be appropriately implemented. For instance, current research demonstrates that poor sleep has a bad effect on making wise decisions. (Baumeister, Vohs and Tice, 2022) According to studies, when under such time constraints, people are more inclined to make dangerous decisions. Therefore, if you need to make a significant decision, it may be worthwhile to postpone it so you have more time to think about the possible implications.

In a study published in the journal *Cognition*, the researchers discovered that when participants were presented with difficult decisions, they frequently displayed a burst of exploration before settling on their preferred, higher-value options. (Hallquist and Dombrovski, 2019) Adaptive decision-making was assisted by keeping only the high-value options in mind while discarding the others, as opposed to attempting to reflect the values of all of the alternatives. This tactic could be one method people can preserve their cognitive abilities while solving issues that require more working memory than they have available.

This could, for example, explain why people have their go-to meals when they visit restaurants, said Michael Hallquist, assistant professor of psychology at Penn State and Institute for CyberScience co-hire.

“There is a set of neural circuits — and cognitive processes that these circuits instantiate — that help you remember the value of different actions, so if you go to a restaurant and try the steak and it was fantastic, the next time you’ll usually remember that,” said Hallquist. “The difficulty, though, is that at any given moment, you’re faced with so many possibilities that you can’t possibly evaluate all of the alternatives in detail. In the decision-making literature, this has been called the exploration-exploitation dilemma. Keeping this in the context of the restaurant example, exploration would be ordering something you haven’t tried before and exploitation would be going back to the steak you know is going to be good. By comparison, if you had previously tried the lasagna and it was unremarkable, would you remember this as clearly as the steak?”

As marketers, understanding how people typically make decisions allows us to develop the **right strategies and the right content** that will meet our consumers at every phase of their decision-making journey. **Remember the good old marketing funnel?** It exists for a reason, and when it is adopted alongside an inbound marketing strategy, we are even better equipped to understand, if not anticipate the likely outcome of our target audience’s decision-making process.

So, what does decision-making come down to?

Essentially, people will go through these 3 steps.

1. Realize, or identify a problem or growth area
2. Explore the options available to them (within their financial or geographical means) that present a solution
3. Select the best option, effectively making a difficult decision a bit easier

If neuromarketing is based on an assumed set of responses to a given question, could it be considered manipulative?

Neuromarketing isn’t inherently manipulative, rather, it is about understanding people’s real **needs** and **wants**. With that knowledge, marketers can develop better products and less wasteful advertising campaigns. These types of campaigns are developed to **add value** to their consumers’ lives, making difficult decisions easier - while providing a solution to a problem.



Using neuromarketing to intersect the decision-making process.

Marketers have historically tried to alter consumer preferences in addition to just measuring them. An area of inquiry that sparks interest, as well as ethical concerns, is the investigation of whether the brain may be manipulated to influence purchases by neuroscience. Here are two potential future applications of neuroscience to **influence** (not manipulate) consumer behavior:

- **Accurate segmentation**

Marketers are inherently interested in learning which demographic groups are most receptive to their branding and advertising initiatives. (This is the whole purpose of marketing - up for a good old target persona development anyone?) Traditionally, this segmentation is carried out by demographics (such as age and wealth) or psychographics (impulsivity). Segmenting consumers based on variations in their brains might be more effective: Researchers at INSEAD discovered changes in the brains of those who are susceptible to marketing messages - therefore, slightly more influenced.

- **Sleep nudging**

Yes, you read that right - it is a thing. Researchers in the field of neuroscience have shown that we are susceptible to influence during certain periods of sleep. According to a 2015 study, smoking was reduced for many days after smokers were exposed to the scent of cigarettes combined with rotten eggs during "phase 2" (the body's preparation for deep sleep). Since then, comparable research has demonstrated the capacity to boost consumer affinity for goods or encourage behaviors.

There are of course more methods, including hormonal manipulation - or temporary neural inhibition - but we venture to guess that these methods shouldn't apply to any sort of education marketing.

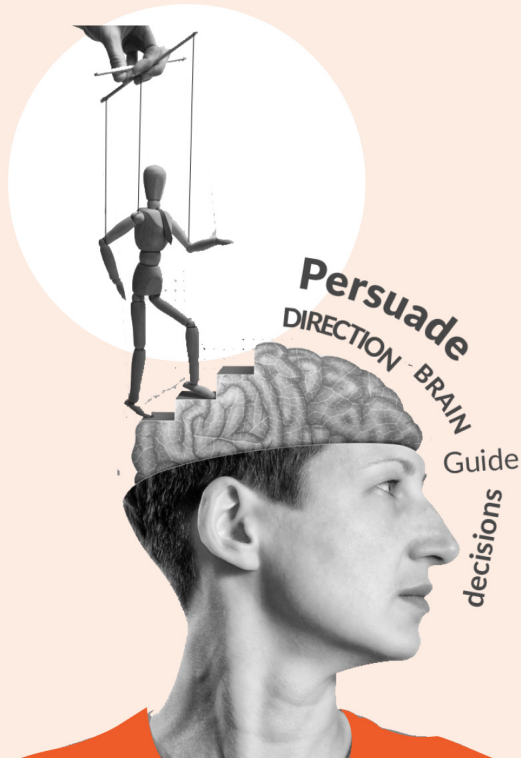
Although neural manipulation may seem sinister or even dystopian to some, proponents point out that marketers currently employ strategies to sway customers without their knowledge. Michael Platt, whose organization just put together a symposium on neuro-ethics, asserts that a man will be persuaded by the superfluous model if he sees an advertisement for a truck with a gorgeous woman standing in front of it. "We need to have these discussions with folks who work in the legal and consumer protection fields. However, I'm not overly frightened currently" He and others point out that using neuroscientific methods to physically alter people's brains without their consent is currently all but impossible. (Michael L. Platt | Psychology, n.d.)

Other modes of manipulation, however, are subtle. The largest worry is the lack of transparency surrounding what goes on in neuroscience labs at big businesses, especially tech powerhouses like Facebook. For example, Facebook, during 2012 secretly changed almost 700,000 users' newsfeeds to affect their mood states, drawing criticism for conducting experiments without users' permission. If these businesses go rogue that's a bigger worry than what we face now.

The developing field of neuromarketing demonstrates the adaptability of knowledge. In other words, various stakeholders, including marketing scholars and practitioners, have varying perspectives on the advancement and implementation of neuromarketing expertise. Different perspectives on information are nothing new, but discovering new links between them helps spread and generate new knowledge. (Butler, 2022)

Neuromarketing requires substantial research to show its academic relevance, (Butler, 2022), much like any new subject of study. The risk at this point in the development of a new field of study is that attention may be diverted to meeting the specialized needs of academic peer review, cut off from the larger societal context. As a result, the research-practice gap in organizational studies is directly impacted by neuromarketing.

With that in mind - it's clear that we're only just beginning to scratch the surface of possibilities (and ethical conundrums) that neuromarketing might present.



The crossover between marketing and Psychology

The fields of marketing and Psychology are some of the most important in our world today.

Marketing influences how we live our lives, what products we buy, and how we spend our money. Psychology, on the other hand, informs us about who we are as humans and why we do what we do. These two fields have been known to be at odds with each other. Marketers are thought of as being manipulative, while Psychologists are thought to be more concerned with the truth. But these two fields have a lot to teach each other—marketing can learn from Psychology, and Psychology can learn from marketing.

In marketing, there has been a shift from products to services and experiences. This has led marketers to begin looking more closely at human behavior. What do people want? How do they behave? How do we change their behavior? These questions have become critical for marketers who want to create successful campaigns that don't just sell products but also create lifelong customers.

The intersection of these two fields has been growing over the past few decades, and marketers now have access to insights that they never had before—insights that can help them better understand their customers and improve their work.

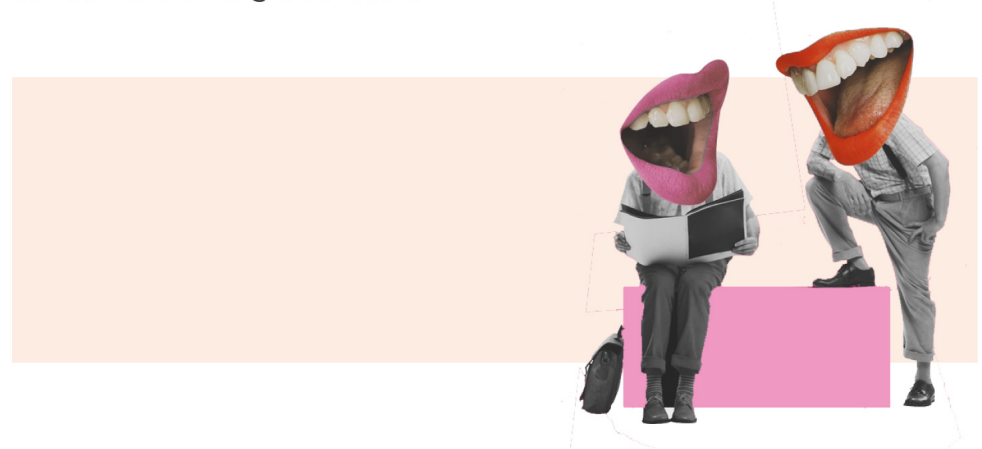
To better understand how marketers can use this information to improve their work, let's look at some of the key ways in which Psychology can inform marketing - we'll dive into these, and a few more tactics later on.

1. Evoking emotion
2. Choosing to focus on why a consumer is making their decision
3. Leveraging social proof

Before we can truly understand the crossover between these fields, it's crucial to understand the intricacies of each field - and why they exist.

Psychology is the study of behavior, thought, and emotion. It's an academic field that has been around for more than 100 years, but it has exploded in popularity over the past decade thanks to new technologies like MRI scans and eye-tracking devices. This technology allows researchers to uncover insights into how our brains work—insights that can be used by marketers to create better content and improve their campaigns.

Marketing can be defined as the process of creating, communicating, and delivering value to customers in ways that build long-term relationships that drive profitable growth. Marketing is an essential function across all organizations, and it's become a complex discipline that requires specialized knowledge and skills. The field of marketing has evolved rapidly over the past decade thanks to new technologies like mobile phones and social media platforms—which are now being used by brands to reach consumers on a global scale.



What is the Psychology of marketing?

The Psychology of marketing is the study of how consumers perceive, interpret and interact with marketing messages. It is a field that has existed for over 50 years, but in recent years it has become increasingly dependent on neuroscience research. This field uses theories from cognitive science to understand how people think about brands and products, as well as the effect this has on their behavior. The two areas of research that are most associated with the Psychology of marketing are perception and motivation. Perception refers to how people process information about brands and products, including their appearance, features, and price. Motivation is studied by looking at what drives consumers to make specific choices; for example, why does someone buy a particular brand over another?

What is the connection between the two fields - and how do we leverage the connection ethically?

The answer lies in the fact that perception and motivation are linked. Perception influences how consumers think about brands and products, which in turn influences their motivation. For example, if you make an expensive product look more appealing to a consumer, then he or she will be more likely to believe that it's high quality and worth paying for. In other words, you can use perception to change consumer behavior. The fact that marketers have an **ethical obligation** to consider the long-term implications of their strategies is important because it means that they cannot simply focus on the short-term benefits of a decision. Instead, they must be aware of how their actions might influence consumer perceptions over time.

Leveraging psychological insights as a marketer.

Marketers today put a lot of effort into developing effective campaigns across a range of channels. Their objective is to develop a message that uses inputs or emotions to alter consumer behavior by persuading their target market to do something, purchase something, sign up for a course, etc.

Although there are various strategies used by marketers to succeed, one of the best is combining marketing with human Psychology.

While the topic still lacks fundamental research, there are a few key insights that we are already aware of, that can be employed in a marketing strategy.

People are inherently impulsive.

There's a reason that grocery store checkout lines are laden with luxury purchases - and that is that people are naturally impulsive, and when given an opportunity - they will make a somewhat thoughtless decision. Sure, this is not an ethical approach by any means - but it has existed for decades, and it's evolved into **flash sales, last-minute email campaigns** - and leveraging the nature of humanity to instill a sense of urgency in every purchase.

The complexity of 'impulsivity' is highlighted by the various uses of the term including the failure to wait, inability to withhold a response, and lack of sensitivity to negative or delayed consequences, all of which likely represent different underlying processes. (Berry et al., 2022)

Significant changes have recently occurred in the study of consumer behavior, particularly in the decision-making process and, as a result, in the factors influencing purchase intention (Stankevich, 2017).

As markets continue to evolve and shape themselves with a heightened rivalry, ongoing innovation in the goods and services on offer, and an increase in the number of businesses operating in the same market, understanding the consumer from a marketing standpoint has become more crucial than ever. (Varadarajan, 2020). Innovation and meeting customer expectations are made feasible by analyzing the variables that directly affect consumer behavior. For marketers to be able to enhance their campaigns and more successfully reach their target demographic, this study is vital. (Ding et al., 2020).

We value imagery more than we do text. Our brains can process images a whole lot faster than they can comprehend the written word. This is for good reason. Play into this. We live in a visual world. Spend some time pondering your use of visuals. People will form an instant impression based on visual appearance.

Words to evoke an emotional response. Certain words or phrases, while cliched, evoke an emotional response. Organic. Gluten-free. Certified. Testimonial. Authentic. There is a perfectly good reason that words like these are plastered all over products: it works. People continue to go for it. Think about the products and services you're marketing and try to find the words that have the potential to elicit an emotional response. Use them when talking about your products.

Decisions are almost always emotional. The decision-making process is emotionally driven. Even people that pride themselves on being rational aren't immune. We all make decisions based on two things: what satisfies our needs and what aligns with how we are. Marketers would be wise to try to elicit an emotional response from potential customers.



How marketers can draw parallels between their field and Psychology.

The human brain is a limitless pool of knowledge - and with that comes opportunity. While we may never fully understand what drives purchasing decisions, there are strategies - or principles that we can apply to our campaigns, that are derived from a rudimentary understanding of the human mind.

1. Really get to know your target audience.

Know who your potential consumers are before you take any action. Which demographics best describe your target market? Developing your target persona takes time, research - and above all an understanding of your business. Are they an 18-year-old Caucasian female who values lifestyle over budget? Give them a name, a story - try and get into their minds. Doing this will give you more insight into what they want.

2. Aim to trigger emotion at every opportunity.

Good marketing triggers a response, while great marketing incites an emotional response in the hearts of its consumer. This is where your ethical obligation comes in too. Focus on positive emotional reactions, to create a relationship with your consumer. The traditional negative trigger should be avoided - simply because the only emotional response that it creates is fear and anxiety - and why would you want your consumer to feel that? Words that incite panic are outdated - and won't serve you in the long run.

3. Aim to understand why your audience would choose you - or your competitor.

Consumers need to know the value of the product or service right off the bat - particularly if it asks for a fair investment. They want to know how it will spark change within their day-to-day lives. Many marketers focus on the value of the product and why you need it. That shows the customer the power behind the product itself. Marketers give the product purpose and explain how beneficial it will be for years to come, not just for the day.

They also focus on the quality of the product and see the potential behind it, not just the price tag. Getting this right means that you need to put yourself in the mind of your consumer. If you're an educational institution that is offering an English language course, behave as if you were a non-native speaker. What would you want in an English course? How would you want to be spoken to? Connect these principles to what your audience values - and you're good to go.

In his book, **Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion**, Dr Robert Cialdini, a psychology and marketing professor at Arizona State University, listed one of his six principles of persuasion as "Commitment and Consistency." (Cialdini, n.d.) According to this, when people make decisions, they consider their **prior choices to guide their present behavior**. Applying this logic to marketing is as simple as leveraging - and asking for social proof. In other words - your testimonials are more valuable than your product.

Marketers should always remain ethical, no matter what they are trying to sell. We may think we're at fault for a bad decision when it first happens, but think about how long that mistake will stick with us and affect our reputation after the data has been reviewed. How well you market your product or service is almost as important as the product itself. If someone thinks you're using trickery, you're unlikely to get their trust anytime soon. This is especially true if you try and make a sale when there's no need for one.

Marketing is heavily reliant on psychological principles, and this is especially true of marketing communications. Far better results will be achieved when marketers include a psychological element in their marketing communications. By doing this, marketers can improve the effectiveness of their communications, and move even closer to achieving the perfect marketing mix.

Understanding the needs of your audience



The crossover between the fields of marketing and Psychology is often overlooked by many marketers. While it may seem like a new trend to have someone who specializes in psychological analysis on your team, the truth is that understanding human behavior has been a core part of business for thousands of years.

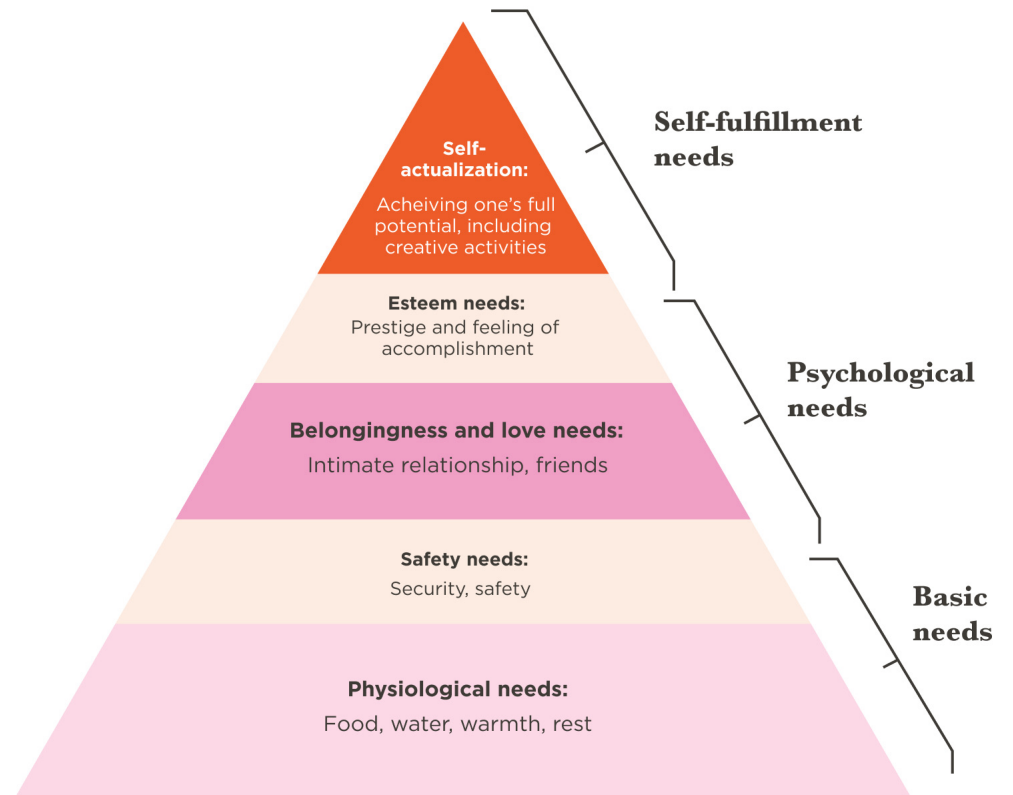
It was Aristotle who said, "man is by nature a social animal." And thousands of years later, we still use this same basic understanding to sell products. It's not just about knowing what people want—it's about understanding what they need.

For marketers, there's a lot of value in understanding these basic human needs, because it can help us better understand our customers. For example, if a consumer is hungry, they're probably more likely to respond favorably to food ads than to anything else. If a consumer feels unsafe, they're more likely to be concerned with safety than anything else—and so on.

For us as marketers to be able to leverage this knowledge and use it effectively, we must first understand the basic needs of humans - and to do that, we need to take a step back, and look at Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. Maslow's hierarchy of needs was developed by Abraham Maslow, a specialist in human Behavioral Psychology. The hierarchy was first developed to help explain the connection between basic human needs and human desires. Now while this was in no way developed with marketing in mind, it is easy to see how something as simple as this pyramid could help us achieve our marketing goals and objectives. We would go as far as to say that without it - marketers have nothing to base their strategies on.

The hierarchy often visualized as a pyramid is split into five categories. Put simply unless we have the fundamental basic human needs at the bottom of the hierarchy, we will not strive to meet any further desires. As each requirement is fulfilled, we move up the hierarchy.

In a 1943 paper titled "A Theory of Human Motivation," American Psychologist Abraham Maslow theorized that human decision-making is undergirded by a hierarchy of psychological needs. In his initial paper and a subsequent 1954 book titled Motivation and Personality, Maslow proposed that five core needs form the basis for human behavioral motivation.



Physiological needs: The first of the id-driven lower needs on Maslow's hierarchy are physiological needs. These most basic human survival needs include food and water, sufficient rest, clothing and shelter, overall health, and reproduction. Maslow states that these basic physiological needs must be addressed before humans move on to the next level of fulfilment

Safety needs: Next among the lower-level needs is safety. Safety needs include protection from violence and theft, emotional stability and well-being, health security, and financial security.

Love and belonging needs: The social needs on the third level of Maslow's hierarchy relate to human interaction and are the last of the so-called lower needs. Among these needs are friendships and family bonds—both with biological family (parents, siblings, children) and chosen family (spouses and partners). Physical and emotional intimacy ranging from sexual relationships to intimate emotional bonds are important to achieving a feeling of elevated kinship. Additionally, membership in social groups contributes to meeting this need.

Esteem needs: The higher needs, beginning with esteem, are ego-driven needs. The primary elements of esteem are self-respect (the belief that you are valuable and deserving of dignity) and self-esteem (confidence in your potential for personal growth and accomplishments). Maslow specifically notes that self-esteem can be broken into two types: esteem which is based on respect and acknowledgement from others, and esteem which is based on your self-assessment. Self-confidence and independence stem from this latter type of self-esteem.

Self-actualization needs: Self-actualization describes the fulfilment of your full potential as a person. Sometimes called self-fulfillment needs, self-actualization needs occupy the highest spot on Maslow's pyramid. Self-actualization needs include education, skill development—the refining of talents in areas such as music, athletics, design, cooking, and gardening—caring for others, and broader goals like learning a new language, travelling to new places, and winning awards.

Deficiency needs vs. growth needs on the hierarchy

Self-actualization was classified as a "growth need" by Maslow, who distinguished it from the hierarchy's bottom four levels, which he referred to as "deficiency needs." If you don't fill your deficient wants, you'll suffer negative or unpleasant consequences, by his thesis. The outcomes of unmet deficient demands range from disease and famine to loneliness and self-doubt. Self-actualization demands, however, have the potential to make you happier without having any negative effects on you. Therefore, addressing the other four core needs comes before addressing the desire for self-actualization.

How can marketers leverage the hierarchy for successful campaigns?

A prospective customer is persuaded to buy the product or service you are selling by effective marketing. One of the best ways to do this is to directly address one or more of their fundamental needs. Many business students are encouraged to use Maslow's hierarchy of needs as a benchmark for directing marketing initiatives, making the case that success depends on satisfying one of Maslow's stated criteria. Maslow's needs hierarchy continues to serve as the cornerstone for many successful psychological approaches to marketing, despite the relevance of alternative needs theories.

By treating the stages of the hierarchy as a blueprint for a campaign design, marketers are equipped with tested and validated research to inform their campaigns!

According to Maslow, as soon as a person meets the needs at one level, they go on to the next and so forth. Brands and marketers need to appreciate how their products benefit the consumer at each point of the pyramid to use them effectively. Marketing professionals would do well to understand the needs that are crucial to each customer or group of customers. When developing a persona, this is vital.

Ask yourself: Where on the pyramid does your service fit in? Where is your persona currently? Have their prior needs been met? If not - how can you design your traditional marketing funnel to be more inclusive, i.e., address their needs at every phase of their journey?

It's no longer about a purchase journey. As we've learned already, decisions are fundamentally emotional. Leveraging this in combination with the hierarchy makes for a stellar campaign.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory has two possible interpretations for businesses and marketers. One of its main purposes is to inspire how a product or service would meet the diverse needs of the consumer. Second, the numerous needs influence the communication that brands engage in while developing their marketing strategies.

The hierarchy and consumer behavior.

The phrase "consumer buying behavior" refers to a consumer's views, interests, and purchasing choices in the marketplace. The study of consumer behavior heavily draws on Sociology and Psychology. Problem identification is the first step in the purchasing process. When a consumer sees that he or she has an unmet need, this is referred to as problem recognition.

The more fundamental the demand, the more driven this consumer is. The objective of marketing is to persuade customers that a certain product satisfies their driving needs. For example, a consumer who has a limited budget will likely spend their money on food and housing (security) before they do education or travel. Remember Sarah? Maslow's hierarchy may very well answer the question of what she would do with that lump sum of money. All of this can be accomplished by marketing through perception, attention, distorting, and retention.

(Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs: How It Can Help Your Marketing, 2022)

Perception.

Perception in marketing is described as a process by which a consumer identifies, organizes, and interprets information to create meaning." The way the audience "interpret" your brand's marketing information is psychological. Seymour Smith, a prominent advertising researcher suggests that selective perception is "a procedure by which people let in, or screen out, advertising material they have an opportunity to see or hear. They do so because of their attitudes, beliefs, usage preferences and habits." These two concepts play a role in how the audience receives your marketing efforts.

Attention.

Grabbing the audience's attention is different from sending a marketing message. You may have a great marketing message to deliver, but nobody is attentive enough to listen. Traditional marketing usually depends on shocking information, surprise, humor, visual aspects, or powerful headline to get attention. In addition, selective attention means that "people are more likely to notice stimuli that relate to a current need.

Distortion.

Your message won't always be understood the way you intended by everyone who sees your advertising. This is called distortion - giving a false impression. Based on their prior conceptions about a brand and product beliefs, viewers frequently misrepresent the facts they are presented with. In other words, customers might have preconceived notions about your product based on their prior interactions with your company. Consumers, for instance, responded differently to questions regarding a food's flavor when the brand of the product was unknown than when the brand of the manufacturer was known. This is what some marketers refer to as "blind loyalty."

Retention.

The average person may be exposed to more than 1,500 advertisements or brand communications per day, according to researchers. Most of the advertising viewers see during the day will be forgotten by viewers. Nevertheless, a message lingers in our memories after being repeated. Or, as they say, "Repeat it till you believe it." Long-standing brands build their recognition by sticking with a catchphrase like "I'm lovin' it" or "Just do it" for a very long time. Repetition aids consumers in recognizing and remembering the brand.

What about education?

Let's think about what Maslow's theory means for those who work in education marketing. Learning is at the very top of the pyramid since it is a "growth need." As a result, we are aware that when our lower-level needs are not met, learning is harder for us. If you haven't eaten in the past 24 hours, you probably won't want to learn how to speak a new language or start your own business. Like how you won't likely be motivated to attend compliance training if your safety is at risk.

There are certain limitations to what we as education marketers can do to meet the physiological needs of our student prospects. We can (and should) be aware of them and how they affect motivation. This awareness must lead to empathy and comprehension as a result.

1. Provide social learning opportunities

Not all learning needs to come at a financial cost. By educating your prospects in a social setting (webinar, social media, email journeys etc.) you're still meeting their needs, without asking for anything in return. This in turn fosters both loyalty and authenticity.

2. Consider gamification and virtual rewards

This is more prevalent than ever with the rise of Gen Z and their educational needs! Strong motivational tools include game elements like Leaderboards, Levels, Experience Points, and Badges. They assist us in achieving the fourth level of Maslow's hierarchy, our need for "esteem." We feel more successful and have a better reputation in the learning environment thanks to virtual awards. Gamification also makes learning more enjoyable, promoting return visits and better memory retention. This can be applied to marketing too.

3. Identify and nurture your Epic Meaning

Epic Meaning is the sense of purpose that fuels our passion for a cause. In a business or ed marketing context, your epic meaning is powered by your mission, vision and values. As such, you should take every possible opportunity to customize your marketing environment in line with these assets.



Motivation Theory

What is the importance of Maslow's hierarchy of needs for contemporary marketers? The answer is simple. Finding innovative ways to provide consumers and prospects with the goods and services that best meet their needs is the responsibility of any competent marketer.

Without an understanding of the factors that influence consumer behavior, this is challenging. Maslow's hierarchy of needs should therefore be quite self-evident in terms of its significance.

The key is to make appeals to each tier of Maslow's hierarchy.

Simply put - how does your offering fit in, or answer a need on the hierarchy?

- Healthier,
- Safer,
- Happier,
- Belong,
- Be the person they'd like to be.

There are countless ways to use Maslow's hierarchy of needs in marketing like this. Levers you can pull include your:

- Branding,
- Copy,
- Imagery,
- Video,
- And any other tool at your disposal.

The key is to use the factors which motivate your target audience to inform all of your campaigns. Additionally, consider that some audiences' needs at each tier will differ from others.

What about the science of human behavior?

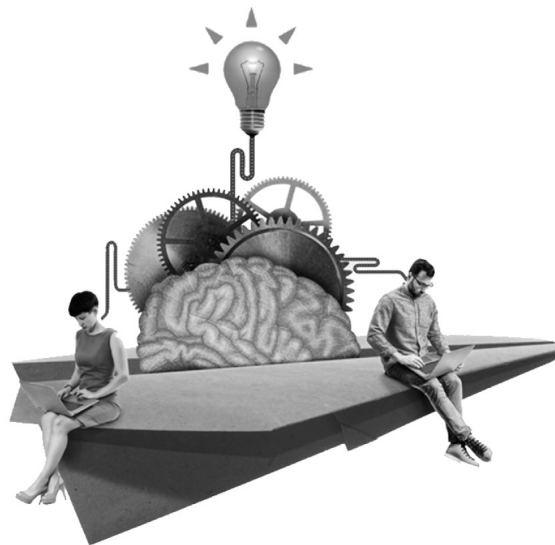
Marketing research techniques have sought to explain and forecast the success of advertising efforts for many years. Conventional methods, however, have largely failed spectacularly. Understanding and modelling consumers' cognitive reactions to marketing messages have long been a methodological difficulty since emotions are potent mediators of how consumers receive messages. For instance, studies have mainly depended on consumers' capacity to express their opinions about a specific advertisement in a private setting, such as a face-to-face interview, a survey, or in a group setting, like a focus group. These techniques, however, have significant drawbacks. First, they make the erroneous assumption that people can describe their cognitive process, which we now know has many subconscious elements. Second, a variety of variables, such as rewards, time restraints, or peer pressure, drive research participants to embellish the reporting of their emotions.

The development of neuroimaging techniques has provided intriguing methodological approaches in this difficult context. With the help of these tools, marketers may finally delve into consumers' minds and learn important things about the unconscious mechanisms that determine whether a message will ultimately succeed or fail. They accomplish this by overcoming the main obstacle to conventional advertising research, which is the assumption that consumers will and can report their reactions to a particular advertisement. (Morin, 2022)



Although the area of neuroscience has expanded significantly over the past ten years, it has not yet totally engulfed the secluded and somber academic corridors of advertising research. Why? First off, there are surprisingly few marketing researchers with formal expertise in cognitive neuroscience. Second, and perhaps more significantly, marketing researchers have long been concerned about backlash from the general public against potential ethical and privacy concerns brought on by the application of neuroimaging technology to commercial endeavors. As a result, there aren't many published scientific neuromarketing studies on how successful advertising is. However, things are shifting swiftly.

(Morin, 2022) Neuromarketing is, in fact, quickly gaining popularity. The number of hits for the term "neuromarketing" on Google has increased dramatically since 2002, going from a few to thousands. Advertising companies, meantime, are starting to realize how crucial it is to forecast the success of campaigns using brain-based methods like eye tracking, EEG, or fMRI. Finally, the recent economic downturn has increased pressure on executives to forecast and assess the return on the enormous sums they invest in advertising campaigns of all kinds. Considering all these aspects shows that there is a pressing need for novel advertising research that makes use of the most recent advancements in our understanding of the brain.



The learning opportunities for marketers are limitless.

The opportunities presented by revealing the brain circuits involved in seeking, deciding, and purchasing a product are only now beginning to dawn on marketers. There is enough published data to indicate a few key neurocognitive principles at work when consumers receive advertising messages, even though many of the studies conducted by neuromarketers are commercial and as such do not adhere to the norms and review procedures set by academics.

The brain oversees all our purchasing habits. It requires a lot of energy to operate effectively. The brain only makes up 2% of our total body weight, but it consumes almost 20% of our energy. Many of the tasks we must perform throughout the day are controlled by the brain below our level of consciousness. This explains why maintaining our rest state or default mode, a crucial feature of brain functioning that continues to confound neuroscientists, requires roughly 80% of our brain energy. It is obvious that we only intentionally employ roughly 20% of our brains. Because nothing matters more than survival, we are largely controlled by the most ancient part of our brain known as the R-complex or the reptilian brain. (Morin, 2022)

Neuromarketing isn't going anywhere, anytime soon. It will also change, much like people and even brands do. Consumers like you might never notice the differences in the communications that are improved or created as a result of knowing more about how we make purchasing decisions. Although criteria have already been adopted to ensure that neuromarketing research is carried out with respect and transparency, ethical difficulties will still come up. Let's not forget that many advertising messages are likewise not for sale. Numerous programs try to stop people from engaging in destructive activities. For instance, we urgently need to strengthen our capacity to persuade individuals not to smoke or not to text and drive. Words are useless. Images do. Why? It is a feature of reptilian brains!

Final thoughts

Neuromarketing has quickly become a large part of our consumer culture. The information found in this guide can be applied to a multitude of marketing situations and will help marketers focus on what matters, time well spent. The science of marketing is critical to a successful marketing campaign and this e-book helps identify the role that neuromarketing plays in education marketing and how we can use this science to inform our campaigns.

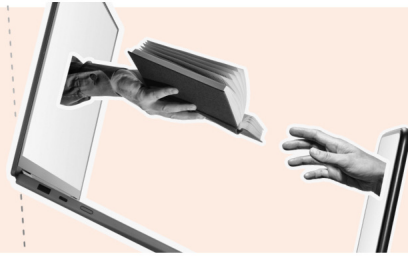
In the digital age, nothing is more important than understanding the psychology of your audience and how you can tailor your campaigns to them. Therefore, we suggest that our industry stays in tune with research being conducted to better understand human behavior, especially in marketing. Though some may agree or disagree with the use of neuromarketing, we all must keep an open mind.

Neuromarketing is pulling back the curtain on the mechanisms behind humans. To understand how a consumer responds to stimuli, marketers must learn how the brain responds. That's where neuromarketing comes in. It's an emerging science that is set to revolutionize educating and selling to a niche audience set.

Ultimately, neuromarketing has become a core topic in the digital marketing industry. Understanding consumer behavior is just as important as understanding consumer decision-making, and this is a resource that marketers can use.



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