



# NEUROBRANDING

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## INTRODUCTION

Brain research, typically appearing under the heading *neuroscience* or *cognitive science*, has provided us with unprecedented insights into how the brain works. Neuromarketing brings together, and sometimes reinterprets, neuroscience findings of particular relevance to the field of marketing, thus creating a new practice.

Does this mean that the '*new marketing*' is a science? Do these insights allow us to develop a marketing program that has predictable outcomes? Can we ensure that our marketing is always effective, simply by following neuromarketing guidelines?

The answer to these questions is clearly '*no.*' Some agencies specializing in neuromarketing imply or even explicitly state that they can guarantee success, but this is a gross overstatement of what they can actually deliver.

To what degree, then, can you expect neuromarketing to contribute to your marketing effort? How can you benefit from neuromarketing insights? How can neuromarketing lift the effectiveness of your marketing strategy and improve its execution? How can neuromarketing help you when you are facing tough marketing challenges such as revitalizing a mature brand, attracting consumers who habitually buy competitive brands or influencing consumers' decisions on their path to purchase?

These are some of the many questions I address in this book. I won't, however, attempt to cover the wide range of neuromarketing applications neuroscience has opened up; rather, I will focus on the key challenge most marketers face: how to build a strong brand and maintain that brand's position in the market place.

In other words, I will apply neuroscience insights and learnings to brand strategy, and I will explore some of the most demanding challenges marketers face when developing brand strategies. My goal is to provide you with a new conceptual framework that will allow you to see marketing challenges and solutions from a different perspective, and to build on a solid

foundation of neuroscience research.

Current marketing practice seems to favor complexity. Models seem to have replaced reality. I do not wish to suggest that marketers live in the clouds, but many marketers use artificial models to develop strategies, and they measure much of their success based on criteria that do not reflect how consumers really think and make decisions.

Take brand pyramids, for argument's sake. Marketing experts spend untold hours, if not days, refining their brand pyramid, a concept that is largely disconnected from the real world as it does not reflect how consumers develop a brand preference or how they make a purchase decision.

Some marketers evaluate the effectiveness of their marketing initiatives on the basis of brand or advertising recall, when neuroscience clearly shows that an exposure to an ad can have a decisive impact on the consumer's purchase decision, even if the consumer is not aware of the exposure.

Yet, these and other examples should not be taken as a criticism of the marketing fraternity. We have all used these and similar approaches and methodologies, simply because there was no alternative. For the last few decades there has been very little innovation when it comes to marketing practice, with the exception of digital developments and analytics that allow us to manage complexity.

But finally, there is a way forward: neurobranding.

Neurobranding allows us see many of the major challenges we face from a new perspective and gives us the opportunity to identify new directions, strategies or solutions. It allows us to understand the following:

- > why consumers reject disruptive ideas when evaluating them in research groups and interviews yet end up enthusiastically buying the brand, product or service once launched;
- > or the corollary: why consumers enthusiastically embrace brands, products and services in market research yet fail to buy them once launched;
- > why some highly engaging, high-profile branding initiatives and communications strategies have failed to move sales while others have had a tremendous impact;
- > why brands mature, and how they can be revitalized;
- > why FMCG (fast-moving consumer goods) brands hardly ever win in the long term when they resort to simple variations of the offer, such as product or package variations;
- > why consumers don't need to be able to recall an ad for the ad to impact on brand perceptions and influence their purchase decision.

These are just some of the important issues I will address in this book. Once these

questions have been answered, you will most likely start to question some of the marketing practices you have followed simply because there were no better alternatives. You may decide to

- > develop *disruptive growth strategies* instead of relying on incremental strategies that hardly shift your brand's market share;
- > develop strategies that do not disrupt the *habitual buying* of your current customers but do disrupt the purchasing behavior of consumers who habitually buy competitive brands;
- > ensure your communications and other elements of your brand strategy and its execution are *on-code*; replace brand pyramids with *brand vision archetypes*; extend your thinking from paid, earned and owned media to all important *touchpoints*;
- > complement superficial focus groups and interviews with *neuroscience-based research* that can explore the territory in the consumer's mind;
- > consider assessing the impact of *exposures* on brand perceptions and purchase decisions rather than assessing recall when evaluating the effectiveness of your marketing communications; capitalize on *cultural disruptions*;

I have structured the material as follows: The first part explores the core building blocks that are essential to an understanding of neurobranding. Even just the first few pages will change your perspective and start you on a journey of discovery; you will start to focus on how the consumer's mind works rather than on some artificial branding model that is based on assumptions about reality.

It is important to stress that this book has been written for marketing practitioners, not scientists. Some authors like to show their own understanding of neuroscience by using medical terminology; however, the truth is that although marketers need to know, for example, whether a message is successfully activating the brain's emotional center, they don't need to know the medical term for this region of the brain. Instead of using medical terminology, I favor working terms that capture the essence of what we are focusing on, such as the 'old' and the 'new' brain, or the 'habitual' and 'executive' brain.

Where possible, I will ask you to do some simple exercises that will demonstrate to you how the mind works. Even if you don't discover something new about how the mind works, it is very likely that you will gain a new perspective on how it might be applied to your branding practice.

Having laid a sound foundation in Part I, we will be ready to get stuck into some of the major branding challenges.

Part II applies a neuroscience framework to understanding why and how consumers buy,

and how you can influence their purchase decisions. I don't believe we will ever be able to predict with certainty how effective a particular brand strategy will be; however, by giving us a validated understanding of how consumers think and make purchase decisions, neuroscience does allow us to move a lot closer to gaining a solid understanding of how to lift the effectiveness of brand strategies.

Let me close by stressing that neurobranding is not a new practice that replaces traditional, mainstream marketing practice.

Rather, it is a new way of looking at branding challenges, which allows us to see new strategic directions and creative opportunities and make more effective use of media to develop new initiatives. It is a transformative practice that allows the astute marketer to infuse current practice with new knowledge.

As neurobranding needs to be integrated with current marketing practice, I sometimes review current practices or use case examples from well-known brand strategies to illustrate how neurobranding can provide you with insights to lift your success rate. In today's crowded market place, neurobranding offers the pioneer a decisive competitive advantage. I have no doubt that over the next decade, neurobranding will become mainstream and common place. Meanwhile, today, you can still exploit the benefits available to early adopters.