



[REVIEWED FOR YOU]

mayato book recommendations in the area of business intelligence and customer relationship management

Title of book: Neuromarketing
 Author(s): **Hans-Georg Häusel (ed.)**
 Details: **in German / 229 pages / Haufe-Verlag 2007 / Price €39.80**
 Reviewed by: **Dr. Marcus Dill**



1 Recommendation

“Neuromarketing” is a collection of articles by different authors, and gives an impression of the wide range of approaches that the term neuromarketing covers in both research and industry. However, the content and relevance of the articles vary considerably, which limits the amount of knowledge that can be gained from this book as a whole. Most of the articles only scrape the surface of their respective topic, so readers who are seriously interested in the links between brain research and customer behavior are forced to turn to more detailed literature. I can recommend reading the rather conservative forecasts by experts and practitioners toward the end of the book. They make clear that neuromarketing remains a predominantly academic field that is still many years away from widespread practical use.

2 Summary of content

First, the editor Hans-Georg Häusel introduces readers to the topic by defining the term neuromarketing. The different chapters in the book represent different approaches and topics, from market research through advertising effectiveness research and the exploration of decisions to buy. Each of the research methods used is borrowed from neuroscience. Much of the book is devoted to brain imaging studies, through which physiological correlations – usually increased activity in certain areas of the brain in connection with perception or behavioral patterns - can be observed. Beyond that, at least two of the articles venture to produce rough models to explain customer behavior, from which consequences for practical use can be derived. The last third of the book comprises interviews with two academics and two practitioners, in which they take a tentative look at the future of neuromarketing.

3 Assessment criteria

Content: This book gives a good impression of neuromarketing's many different questions and approaches – but also of the immaturity that pervades this topic: It contains many ideas, many approaches, and many interesting aspects, but much of it is anecdotal, disjointed, and unsystematic, too. Just like the research area itself, the book lacks coherency and a clear vision. Only a few of the chapters attempt to develop models from individual insights. As a result, readers cannot gain a complete overview in the sense of an integrated summary. Where this is attempted, for example, in the chapter by Scheier and Held and the chapter by the editor himself, readers benefit here and there, but will be forced to turn to more detailed literature by these authors to acquire a deeper understanding.

The diversity of the individual chapters sometimes gives the impression that finding topics and authors was a hard task and not all authors were prepared to adopt a standardized publication style. Some sections – for example, the chapter on storytelling by Werner Fuchs – will lead non-experts to ask themselves what they have to do with the topic at all. The idea to include interviews in the last third of the book could also have been born out of necessity – in other words, a lack of authors. However, it is precisely this section that makes a highly interesting read, not least because of the healthy distance that some of the interviewees have from the practical relevance of neuromarketing - despite being fundamentally sympathetic to this research area. In this respect, I can especially recommend the interviews with the renowned neuroscientist Manfred Spitzer and Hans-Willi Schroiff, the head of market research at Henkel.

Readability: The chapters are very different in terms of style, depth of content, and structure. When turning the page from one article to the next, readers will notice many inconsistencies. By adding introductory paragraphs at the start of each chapter, the author attempts to make a transition in terms of content only. But it is obvious that the authors were not given many – if any – standards for structuring and writing their chapters. Many typing errors – at times in prominent places (such as chapter headings!) – give the impression that comprehensive editing was dispensed with, as is unfortunately the case with many specialist publications nowadays. Given the hefty price of almost €40 and the fact that most of the authors, as professional service providers, see their contributions more as a means of advertising and will probably not have expected exorbitant fees, it is difficult to understand why corners had to be cut in quality. The lack of an index for the whole book and a common list of further reading (some of the authors make recommendations for further reading within their chapters) reduces this book's suitability as introductory literature or a work of reference.

Practical use:

Most of the authors operate in that gray area between science and profit. Many of them work as professional consultants in this environment. Accordingly, they attempt to bridge the gap between pure research on the one hand and practical applications on the other, and try to convince potential customers – the marketing departments of this world – that companies can generate added value by adopting neuroscientific methods. It is without question that neurosciences offer countless interesting insights that can also help marketing and advertising professionals optimize their processes. Publications and academic studies from this area will certainly continue to be read with great interest. But it is unlikely that this book will convince companies that they should integrate neuroscientific techniques into their market research method portfolios. Too few insights can be gained in specific cases and the use of such methods is too expensive. Neuroinformatics' great strength and singularity is – without a doubt – its ability to investigate market-relevant perception and decision-making processes that operate in a person's subconscious and at an emotional level. It is difficult – if not impossible – to access these areas using conventional market research methods, such as surveys. But much more pure research is still required: Before it becomes worth companies' while to deploy neuromarketing techniques to address their specific issues, we must first gain a more mature understanding of the human brain. And more cost-effective and efficient techniques must be developed. However, in the long term, I can well imagine that neuromarketing could meaningfully supplement the existing methods for measuring and optimizing the efficiency of marketing methods. This book will certainly not speed up the process. It has thus only partly met its objective of bringing brain research closer to marketing practitioners.