

World Knowledge Forum 2012

October 10, 2012—What Brain Science tells us about Marketing

A renowned neuropsychologist and two CEOs invested in the neuropsychology arena discussed the implications of brain analysis on marketing tactics at today's World Knowledge Forum panel discussion entitled, "What Brain Science Tells us about Marketing."

Present on the panel were Dr. Gemma Calvert, Founder and Managing Director of Neurosense Ltd., Dr. Charles Spence, Professor of Psychology at Oxford University, and Mr. Timothy Llewellynn, CEO of nViso SA.

Dr. Calvert discussed how focus groups are an unreliable method of market research. "People don't say what they think," she said. This may be because people lie, she added, but it may also be because they do not truly know their own beliefs. "The subconscious is a key and dominant player," she continued, and because of the dominance of the subconscious, people do not always share their true feelings.

"We have bought into the idea of the rational man," Dr. Calvert continued. However, she discussed how neuropsychology has demonstrated that people are feeling creatures before they are thinking creatures. She showed how emotional responses can be observed in the brain, noting that "the implications for marketing, then, are fairly obvious."

Companies can use this technology, Dr. Calvert explained, to gain an accurate understanding of consumers' reactions to a product in testing. In fact, she said that marketing strategies now need to take this technology into account in order to survive.

Dr. Spence's focal point was an affirmation of sensory congruence, or the idea that all senses come together and do not act independent of one another. "The thing I'm most passionate about is that our brains are multi-sensory," he said.

He demonstrated with an example. "I don't think this banana's quite right," he said. "It tastes triangular."

The Oxford professor shared that although this may sound strange at first, it makes perfect sense after neuropsychological considerations. It is important that companies market their products in a way where all sensory data emitting from the product complement one another. If companies fail to do this, he said, they risk sensory suppression. Products may actually taste, feel, or smell different based on the data intake from other senses.

Mr. Llewellynn also knows the importance of understanding emotions when developing a marketing strategy. "Understanding emotions helps us understand decision making," he said, adding that in order to "drive sales and customer loyalty, business wants to create products that are emotionally engaging."

However, Mr. Llewellynn also realized that there is a significant problem in the ability to measure the emotional response that a product elicits.

Mr. Llewellynn talked about the power of the face. It is no surprise that emotions can be identified by facial expressions, but Mr. Llewellynn wants a way to collect data on emotional responses to products in the comfort of

their own homes. His company, nViso, has developed facial imaging technology. “Facial imaging technology is when a computer can read facial expressions,” he explained.

There are 147 muscles in the face, and Mr. Llewellynn stated that his software is able to analyze these muscles and determine whether the subject is happy, surprised, afraid, angry, disgusted, or sad. A typical web camera is sufficient as a recording device for the subject.

From there, businesses can judge a subject’s emotional response to an online advertisement. Equipped with this knowledge, companies can market their products more effectively.