

# Neuromarketing and Evil

By Roger Dooley



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Seth Godin has a nice post on ethical marketing that is equally applicable to neuromarketing. Godin makes the point that marketing can be used for evil purposes, such as persuading people to use products that are bad for them, but that marketing can be beautiful, too. He sums up,

Just like every powerful tool, the impact comes from the craftsman, not the tool. Marketing has more reach, with more speed, than it has ever had before. With less money, you can have more impact than anyone could have imagined just ten years ago. The question, one I hope you'll ask yourself, is what are you going to do with that impact?

For me, marketing works for society when the marketer and consumer are both aware of what's happening and are both satisfied with the ultimate outcome. I don't think it's evil to make someone happy by selling them cosmetics, because beauty isn't the goal, it's the process that brings joy. [From Is Marketing Evil?]

Some people seem to find the idea of neuromarketing ominous or scary. I have debunked the idea of "super-ads" multiple times, but I agree that we should be concerned about how we use ALL of the marketing tools at our disposal, whether those tools are fMRI brain scans or social media.

Neuromarketing can be beautiful, too... If an ad is made more engaging by using the tools of neuroscience, it's a win for all. And, even better, if a product can be improved by gauging the REAL wants and needs of customers, it's bound to be more satisfying for the consumer and more successful for the company.

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Roger Dooley

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Roger Dooley is the author of *Friction* (McGraw Hill, April 26, 2019) and *Brainfluence* (Wiley). He is the primary author at *Neuromarketing*, contributes at *Forbes*, and hosts the Brainfluence Podcast. Learn more at RogerDooley.com, and follow him on Twitter at @rogerdooley.

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## 8 Comments

- Gregorylent Says

it is a dead-easy call ... is marketing evil? ...

one simple rule of consciousness gives the game away ... energy follows intention ...

if you are trying to get something from me, for yourself, you are evil ... if you trying to give me something useful, you are not ...

the determining factor is YOUR motivation ...

that is all

Reply
- Kimberly Bock Says

Just had a similar discussion in the commentary of my most recent post.

The commenter doesn't approve of marketers blogs. I tried to explain to her the benefits of providing services, tools, education, etc that are useful as well as protecting the consumer from harm they might receive while trying to find it elsewhere.

Marketing can be ethical.

Reply
- Susan Weinschenk Says

And now that the principles of persuasion and neuromarketing are being applied to the web (subject of my latest book), it brings up these ethical questions again. Ultimately it's up to each individual to keep ethics front and center.

Reply
- Joe Says

I just finished the book Predictably Irrational, which is about behavioral economics. While it provides ideas that can be used to manipulate, those same tools can be used to help better understand customer wants so you can provide better value. It's all a matter of how you use the knowledge.

Reply
- Michael Says

I never liked the idea of marketing ethics... seems like an oxymoron to me.

After all who will be the final arbiter?

And based on what belief system? That gets pretty cumbersome and intrusive.

Let the people rule with their pocket books.

If they don't like a plump, pink female behind in their advertisements, then they don't have to buy the product.

However if they do like to fantasize about a muscular, trim gentlemen with a nice bulge and loads of cash and it moves them to action... well so be it!

Who a we to say which is right and which is wrong?

Reply
- Tony Fortner Says

Yet another painfully obvious statement from Mr. Godin.

Reply
- Justine Foo Says

I've always believed that the real power of 'neuromarketing' isn't to make ads better. (though some would argue that ad testing is the most commercially viable business)

The real power of neuroscience is to help us reimagine what marketing is - to really flesh out what loyalty is and how it develops. To help companies think about customer relationships beyond the 4Ps.

This shift is already happening in the marketing arena... it can be greatly informed by the deep understanding of human behavior and motivation that neuroscience has to offer.

Reply
- Richard Says

Neuromarketing is beautiful and continues to amaze me and the thought of it being evil is acceptable but at least were known why our bad choices are being made. For modern advertising and for the modern exponent of form the individual element; the artist's own touch is of absolutely no consequence

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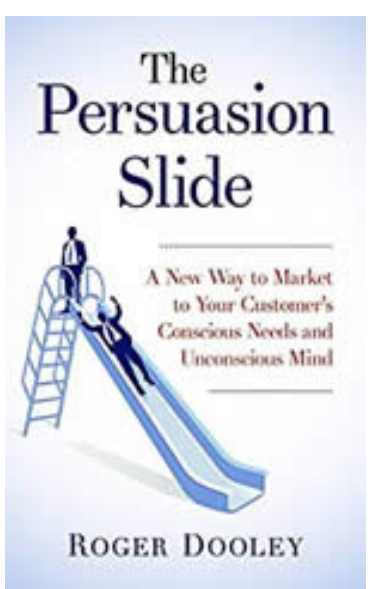
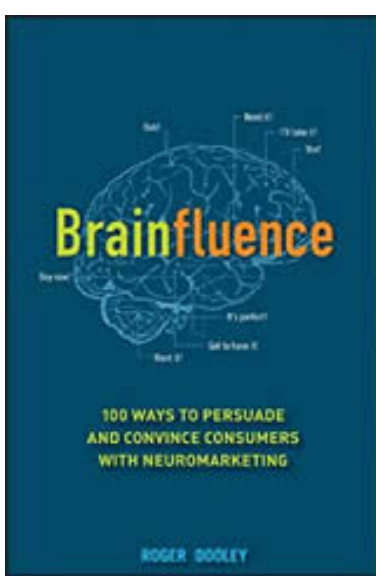
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