

ALL IN THE MIND

While those brands in the upper echelons of the Top100 understand the value of a multichannel marketing strategy, how they engage with the customer could be set to change, with the advent of neuromarketing. *Checkout* speaks to **Thom Noble**, managing director of NeuroFocus Europe, a company recently acquired by Nielsen.



unconscious responses. The ability to do that now in a quantitative fashion is what's so exciting."

HOW IT WORKS

The research is carried out on test subjects using an electroencephalogram (EEG), a brain scan that enables researchers to monitor electrical impulses within the brain. Such scans are commonplace within the realm of medical science, where they are frequently used to diagnose epilepsy.

Its applications for neuromarketing have only been recently realised, but could well be invaluable for consumer research. The EEG scan takes place while the subject is shown a selection of advertisements for various brands, measuring factors such as subconscious response, attentiveness and memory function.

It is administered through a cap fitted with 64 to 128 sensors, with eye-tracking equipment also employed to provide further verification of the EEG readings. The results from these two sources are then aggregated via a connected computer, which can also calibrate previous findings. A typical sample group comprises at least 24 volunteers, whose reactions to certain brands are gauged in order to deduce if that brand (and its marketing strategy) strikes a chord within their subconscious.

NeuroFocus' practitioners also readily acknowledge the limits of the research, as deducing the exact criteria that dictate consumer choice remains difficult, even with these developments. However, researchers maintain that neuromarketing's primary applications include uncovering what marketing forms and advertisements are most effective for which brands, thus serving to complement more orthodox forms of research.

"What we're providing is an extra layer of information," says Noble, "that, put together with other findings and research, can give a multiplying effect in terms of robustness and the ability to deliver insights you just can't get from anywhere else."

With the proliferation of advertising in modern society, in its plethora of forms, there is a consensus among some quarters that consumers are growing increasingly immune to traditional forms of advertising and promotion, decreasing their effectiveness as a consequence. With that in mind, the work being carried out by NeuroFocus could have groundbreaking implications for marketing in the future, which in turn could prove to be a shrewd investment for Nielsen. ■

Nielsen will be hosting a dedicated live event on Wednesday 7 September, at which Thom Noble, managing director of NeuroFocus Europe, will introduce the concept of neuromarketing and its potential effects. For further information, email NielsenIrelandCommunications@nielsen.com.



With the purchase of innovative neuromarketing firm NeuroFocus in May of this year, Nielsen has expanded into one of the few major areas of market research in which it did not (until now) have a significant presence, and embraced a new, unique approach to consumer marketing.

Simply put, NeuroFocus' speciality, neuromarketing, involves the study of a subject's subconscious reactions to certain brands in order to deduce whether or not they share an underlying connection. The implications for consumer research are monumental, affording companies with access to information not readily available through standard market research means, such as questionnaires or focus groups.

"Only 2% of thoughts are above the level of consciousness," Thom Noble, managing director of NeuroFocus Europe, explains. "The vast

majority of what we do is lying beneath. With the advent of neuroscience over the last 20 years, particularly within the last five years or so, there's been such an upsurge in the ability of neuroscience to understand how the brain works."

Think about your typical focus group: when an individual is asked to think about a certain product, their feeling towards the product may change. The more they think about it, the more it changes. Neuromarketing seeks to delve behind this, offering a subconscious analysis of the relationship between that potential customer and the product in question.

"This has quite profound implications, when you're really trying to understand the emotional response of consumers and how they're thinking and feeling," says Noble. "It's extremely difficult to extract that without looking at the