

Neurofocus expanding the power of the mind, says CEO

UK launch is first step in global expansion, chief executive Anantha Pradeep tells *Research*

UK-- California-based advertising and brand measurement agency Neurofocus is to open in the UK before branching out into India, Japan and Latin America.

The agency, which measures brain wave activity and skin reactions to test the effectiveness of adverts, packaging and marketing campaigns, is already established in the US and is now seeing demand from clients around the world.

Neurofocus, which is part-owned by **Nielsen**, measures respondents' brain activity through a baseball cap fitted with 64 sensors that calculates brain activity 2,000 times per second. Whenever a person wearing the cap watches an advert or examines a package, the sensors pick up the precise moments their minds become active and the reactions are broken down to reveal how memorable the advert was, how engaged the viewer was and how likely they are to make a purchase.



Neurofocus CEO Anantha Pradeep

Neurofocus already boasts some of the largest US FMCG and retail names as clients and is already working with "major" players in the UK entertainment and packaging sectors, testing adverts and products before they go to market, Pradeep told *Research*.

He would not name names but did say that one area providing plenty of work at the moment is what he calls neurocompression, the process of shortening adverts for use on the internet and mobile phones. This technique uses electroencephalography technology to measure attention, engagement and memory retention to pinpoint the precise moments in an advert that grab a viewer's attention the most and have a higher chance of purchase intent. The advert is then shortened to include just these moments for online and mobile use.

This ability to pinpoint the most effective parts of an ad campaign – the parts most likely to lead to a sale – are what Pradeep says is drawing clients to the company. "People want a measurable return and to minimise risk," he said, "and there is great value in accountability."

This accountability, Pradeep claims, comes from the "real reactions and deep consumer opinions" drawn from his company's techniques. He said that the firm recently tested a major US client's ad portfolio, and told them which of the several adverts in circulation would have the highest chance of a sale or enquiry. After a long pause, the client told Pradeep that the ad Neurofocus had picked out had been rated "mediocre" by its own testing agency but, inexplicably in their minds, had resulted in the highest number of sales enquiries.

Clients have been quick to snap up this insight, Pradeep said, and quoted another success story where a crisp manufacturer came to Neurofocus looking to make its advertising more effective. After a spell of lab testing, the firm found that that the crisp's major selling point was the crunch made when the eater first takes a bite. This was quickly incorporated into adverts to tap into consumers' subconscious and the new campaign has been a success as a result.

Pradeep said that there has been client interest from Japan, India and Latin America and said that the next phase of the firm's plan would be to locate and open offices in those regions.

The CEO said that that selling into these new regions would be "minimal" and he was wary not to "fall into the trap that online research did" and open in new countries without having a strong client base.

Meanwhile, the firm has appointed Gerald Zaltman to its advisory board. Zaltman is currently a business professor at Harvard University and has written several books on the working of consumers' minds.

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Published on the 7th October 2008

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