Author's response to reviews

Title: Neuromarketing and consumer neuroscience: Contributions to neurology

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Response letter to the editors of BMC Neurology and to the reviewers Professors Giovanni Berlucchi and Ale Smidts concerning the paper ‘1870113698778651 - From neuromarketing to consumer neuroscience: Contributions to neurology’

The authors would like to thank the reviewers for their time and their valuable and constructive comments.

In the following we want to respond point-by-point to Professor Smidts recommendations to improve the quality of our paper:

1. “Three topics are being discussed: reward, trust, ethics. It is not clear why the authors precisely decided to focus on these three topics and why other topics are left out…”

   RESPONSE: We added a paragraph on page 8 in which we argue that consumer neuroscience has developed into a broad research field in recent years, and as such that a complete review of all the topics that have been studied is beyond the scope of this paper. We focused on three topics that we think are of most relevance to neurologists. First, the reward system, as it plays an important role in several neurological diseases and their behavioral symptoms. Second, we included a section about trust, as it is the basis of every patient-physician relationship, and third, we added a section about ethical issues of neuromarketing, since this is the main focus of public attention in this field.

2. “A more consistent use of terminology is required. In particular, in section 3…”

   RESPONSE: We screened the paper and made sure that only the terms “neuromarketing” and “consumer neuroscience” are used, and each is used in a consistent manner.

3. “It is stated in the final sentence that: …..functional brain imaging work on brand preference conditioned by advertising has not been realized yet. Though true for brand preference per se, I would suggest to refer to the fMRI studies conducted by Klucharev et al. (SCAN, 2008) and Stallen et al. (J Econ Psychology, 2008) where preferences for products (indeed more general than brands) were modulated by celebrity endorsement. Celebrity endorsement is a popular technique in advertising and the advertising process was mimicked in these studies. In Klucharev et al (2008) effects of the celebrity-product fit (i.e. expertise) were shown on both product preference and memory for the endorsed product 24 hrs later outside the scanner, and the underlying brain process was detailed. In a follow-up study by Stallen et al (2010) the unique effect of Fame on memory and attitude for products was studied.”

   RESPONSE: Thank you very much for this helpful suggestion. We have now included the indicated articles in a paragraph on pages 11 and 12.

4. “What I found lacking in section 3 (page 20 top) on ethical guidelines are the initiatives by industry organizations ESOMAR and NMSBA who both published rules and guidelines for commercial neuromarketing studies.”

   RESPONSE: Many thanks for raising this point. We have now included these references in the revised version of our manuscript (Page 20).
5. “Remarkably, while trust is indeed an important topic in consumer behavior and marketing, consumer neuroscience has not studied this topic yet…Please be much more precise about this in the abstract and section on trust.”

RESPONSE: Thank you for pointing out this need for more clarity. We added a paragraph to the section about trust, in which we highlight the importance of neuroeconomics and decision neuroscience in the research on trust. We further adjusted the abstract in the same sense and added the review of Rilling and Sanfey, (2011) to the references.

6. “Page 18, ‘compulsory rules’: Do the authors have any suggestion how adherence to ethical codes and conduct can be enforced in applied commercial work with neuroimaging?”

RESPONSE: This is an excellent suggestion. On Page 18 we have added a sentence where we suggest the establishment of a registry of companies using neuroimaging in a commercial setting as well as an ethics committee with an oversight role in this respect.

7. “Title: consider changing. It is not clear what this ‘from’ ‘to’ precisely refers to in the title…”

RESPONSE: We agree on further reflection, and as such we have changed the title to ‘Neuromarketing and consumer neuroscience: Contributions to Neurology’

Reviewer’s report by Professor Berlucchi:

“This paper provides an extensive and useful review of concepts, methods and findings in the new field of neuroeconomics. It proposes a distinction between neuromarketing, which may be accused of being a pseudoscience, and a serious study of the brain mechanisms involved in consumer behavior, which the authors name consumer neuroscience. Findings from the latter approach may contribute to clinical neurology in relation to morbid changes in specific forms of behavior (gambling, trust, compulsive buying), which occur in various neurological conditions. The review is informative and its conclusions are plausible.”

RESPONSE: Thank you for your encouraging remarks!

We further updated the references as two articles were still in press as we submitted the manuscript:


Also, we reformatted the text (unjustified) and the references according to journal guidelines.

Yours sincerely,

Andrija Javor – on behalf of the authors