

# Brain scans could be marketing tool of the future

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Using advanced tools to see the human brain at work, a new generation of marketing experts may be able to test a product's appeal while it is still being designed, according to a new analysis by two researchers at Duke University and Emory University.

So-called "neuromarketing" takes the tools of modern [brain](#) science, like the functional MRI, and applies them to the somewhat abstract likes and dislikes of customer decision-making.

Though this raises the specter of marketers being able to read people's minds (more than they already do), neuromarketing may prove to be an affordable way for marketers to gather information that was previously unobtainable, or that consumers themselves may not even be fully aware of, says Dan Ariely, the James B. Duke professor of psychology and [behavioral economics](#) at Duke.

In a perspective piece appearing online in the journal *Nature Reviews Neuroscience*, Ariely and Gregory S. Berns of Emory's departments of psychiatry, economics and neuropolicy, offer tips on what to look for when hiring a neuromarketing firm, and what ethical considerations there might be for the new field. They also point to some words of caution in interpreting such data to form marketing decisions.

Neuromarketing may never be cheap enough to replace focus groups and other methods used to assess existing products and advertising, but it could have real promise in gauging the conscious and unconscious

reactions of consumers in the design phase of such varied [products](#) as "food, entertainment, buildings and political candidates," Ariely says.

**More information:** "Neuromarketing: the hope and hype of neuroimaging in business," Dan Ariely and Gregory S. Berns. *Nature Reviews Neuroscience*. [www.nature.com/nrn/journal/va0 ...nt/full/nrn2795.html](http://www.nature.com/nrn/journal/va0...nt/full/nrn2795.html) doi:10.1038/nrn2795

Provided by Duke University

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