

EEGs can predict a movie's success better than surveys

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Credit: Cristie Guevara/public domain

Seventy five percent of movies earn a net loss during their run in theaters. A new study in the *Journal of Marketing Research* finds that brain activity visible through EEG measures may be a much cheaper and more accurate way to predict the commercial success of movies.

"Several decades of research have shown that many important mental

processes occur below the surface of consciousness, leaving people very limited in their ability to predict their own future behavior," write authors Maarten A. S. Boksem and Ale Smidts of Erasmus University. "This study suggests that neuroimaging technologies such as EEG machines can reveal information that is not obtainable through conventional marketing surveys."

The authors sat participants in comfortable chairs in a darkened room in front of a computer screen with a pair of speakers. Participants were then hooked up to EEG machines, and asked to view 18 movie trailers in random order while their [brain activity](#) was recorded. After watching each trailer, the participants were asked to rate how much they liked the trailer they'd just seen, and how much they'd be willing to pay for a DVD of each film.

Finally, after they had watched all 18 trailers, study subjects were presented with the DVDs for the 18 films. The authors asked viewers to sort the DVDs by preference, and participants were given the three DVDs they most preferred.

The study found that the EEG readings were notably more accurate than the participants' conscious statements in predicting which film the participant would actually choose.

"This study has shown that compared to traditional surveys, EEG machines capture more accurate and complete information regarding what the consumer will actually do. EEG tests are relatively cheap, and even a modest increase in ability to predict consumer choice is likely to be of immeasurable value to marketers," conclude the authors.

More information: *Journal of Marketing Research* [DOI: 10.1509/jmr.13.0572](https://doi.org/10.1509/jmr.13.0572)

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