

## CONSUMER PSYCHOLOGY – SCIENCE AND PRACTICE THE INFLUENCE OF PSYCHOLOGY AND NEUROMARKETING ON CONSUMER BEHAVIOR

*Snježana Stanišić<sup>1</sup>*

### Abstract

*Behavioral economics deals with the relationship between emotions and mental frameworks that influence consumer decision-making. The essence of this discipline lies in the ability to assess the value of a particular event and to choose between different options. Research conducted in this and related areas deepens the understanding of consumer psychology, providing practical insights for marketers and sellers who aim to adapt their products and marketing activities to the psychological states of consumers. Based on the findings of how consumers make decisions on a subconscious level – regarding what to buy, where to buy, and when to buy – a new scientific discipline has emerged in marketing: neuromarketing. The main task of neuromarketing is to determine the factors that influence a consumer's decision to purchase a specific product or service. This paper focuses on the consumer, their reactions, relationships, and emotions in various situations to which they are frequently exposed. To support this, a survey was conducted among a number of consumers, who responded to questions that were predominantly psychological in nature.*

**Key words:** *Consumer psychology, neuromarketing, emotions, behavioral economics*

### Introduction

Economics is a complex science shaped by numerous variables, which contributed to the development of behavioral economics. This discipline integrates economic analysis with psychological assumptions, focusing on emotional, social, and cognitive factors that influence decision-making. Its central concern lies in understanding how emotions and mental frameworks guide consumer choices and how individuals evaluate events and select between available options.

Key concepts in behavioral economics include heuristics, framing, and market inefficiencies. Heuristics are simplified rules of decision-making, often based on past experience and emotions rather than strict logic. Framing refers to the way information is presented, shaping perception and judgment. Market inefficiencies arise from irrational decisions, mispricing, and other behavioral anomalies. Alongside these approaches, neuromarketing has emerged as a modern method for studying consumer behavior. By using technologies such as EEG, fMRI, and eye-tracking, it enables observation of consumer reactions to stimuli like packaging, logos, or advertising messages. Although this approach provides highly reliable insights, its application is limited by high costs and ethical challenges.

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This paper focuses on consumers, their reactions, relationships, and emotions in everyday purchasing situations. To explore these aspects, a survey was conducted among a group of consumers who answered predominantly psychological questions. Compared to neuromarketing techniques, this method offers a more economically feasible way of gaining insights into consumer behavior.

### **Behavioral Economics, Neuromarketing, and Neuroeconomics**

In economics, models traditionally assumed that individuals make purchasing decisions guided exclusively by reason, and that the final decision to buy a product is determined by the expected utility the consumer derives from it (Kahneman, 2003). From this perspective, the analysis of information about products and services, as well as the purchasing decision itself, should follow logical rules. However, the results of numerous studies indicate that a large number of factors—whether directly related to a specific product or not—can significantly influence the likelihood of purchase. In such situations, the concepts of behavioral economics, neuromarketing, and neuroeconomics become highly relevant. When choosing products, people often rely not only on rational arguments but also on heuristics, pre-established cognitive schemas, and emotional reactions to the product, brand, or persuasive message (Kahneman et al., 2005). These modes of decision-making, typically applied to minimize the expenditure of energy and time, do not take all possible options into account. Instead, the selection process is directed toward the most efficient solution, one that is derived from both prior experience and the inevitable process of human evolution.

The process of making purchasing decisions represents a sequence of influences and choices that ultimately result in the desired action. In order to better understand this process, consumer behavior models were developed with the aim of identifying the variables that influence purchasing decisions and their interrelationships (Kesić, 1999). An important stage of this process is the evaluation of satisfaction after purchase, where the consumer assesses whether the product has met their expectations. Based on this experience, either satisfaction or dissatisfaction arises. It is important to distinguish between the act of purchase and the use of the product, since the person who buys the product is not always the one who uses it, and it is often the user who ultimately evaluates satisfaction. Moreover, purchasing decisions are based on expectations, while only through product usage can those expectations be confirmed or disproven. This experience and the resulting level of satisfaction strongly influence whether the consumer will repurchase the same brand in the future.

After making a purchase, however, consumers may also experience a feeling of uncertainty about the decision they have made – a phenomenon known as cognitive dissonance. This refers to the psychological discomfort that arises from doubts about whether the purchasing decision was indeed the right one.

Traditionally, most marketing decisions were based on market research reports. These reports represent the meaningful interpretation of data collected through self-assessments, surveys, and focus group interviews (Bhardwaj et al., 2023). As is well known, earlier studies were carried out using methods that, in some cases, are still applied today. The results of these methods made it possible to investigate and obtain insights into the conscious and rational aspects of decision-making.

Following research on how consumers make decisions on a subconscious level regarding what to buy, a new scientific discipline was introduced into marketing – neuromarketing. At the beginning of the 21st century, Ale Smidts introduced the term neuromarketing, while

Martin Lindstrom became its founder and driving force (Šola, 2013). The main task of neuromarketing is to uncover the factors that drive a consumer to purchase a specific product or service. The central idea behind this discipline is that from the moment we enter a store to the moment we make a final purchasing decision, less than four seconds are needed. This suggests that there is no purely rational explanation for the act of purchase. The conclusion is that consumer behavior in this context is largely irrational, subconscious, and instinctive, with the answer lying within the brain itself (Kos, 2018).

### **Neuromarketing: Techniques and Methods Used**

Neuromarketing is a discipline that combines insights from neuroscience with marketing strategies to gain a deep understanding of consumer behavior through the analysis of physiological data (Mario Quiles Pérez et al., 2025). In the field of neuromarketing and neuroeconomics, specific techniques are employed, such as brain imaging (fMRI, PET, EEG) and physiological measures (respiration rate, heart rate, sweating, eye blinking, skin conductance), which provide insights into how individuals experience certain stimuli, such as persuasive messages. In this process, neurologists conduct the research and provide medical interpretations, while marketing managers and company executives make strategic decisions based on these findings. Understanding consumer brain responses to specific marketing stimuli is crucial for creating innovative products that address newly identified consumer needs unmet by the market. Since these insights can also be applied to market entry strategies, pricing policies, and marketing campaigns, neuromarketing can be regarded as offering a strategic approach to engaging with modern consumers (Slijepčević et al., 2018).

Medical devices used in neuroeconomic and neuromarketing research may pose negative health risks, or even lethal effects, for participants if applied incorrectly or if faulty, dysfunctional equipment is used. Therefore, the technical aspects of medical device usage must be strictly regulated in practice, with the devices operated only by medical or other qualified experts who are properly trained (Murphy et al., 2008).

Regarding ethical standards in science, every participant must provide informed consent before actively taking part in research. This consent requires participants to understand the problem under investigation, the conditions in which the study is conducted, their role in the process, as well as the practical use and broader implications of the research findings. Some of the commonly used techniques include:

- EEG (Electroencephalography)
- PET (Positron Emission Tomography)
- fMRI (Functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging)
- Eye-tracking glasses
- Physiological response monitoring

Although methods and techniques are semantically and conceptually distinguished in the literature, authors in the field of neuromarketing often use the terms neuromarketing tools, neuromarketing techniques, neuromarketing technologies, and neuromarketing methods interchangeably (Bayle-Tourtoulou & Badoc, 2020). For further details, see Busher et al. (2010).

- EEG (Electroencephalography) is a method of recording the brain’s electrical activity, providing insights into the quality of prevailing brain waves of the subject at a given moment. The value of EEG in research lies in the fact that certain EEG waveforms are associated with specific states of consciousness (e.g., high-amplitude waves with a frequency of 8–12 Hz are characteristic of an awake but relaxed state). The prominence of EEG in neuromarketing arises from its ability to capture a wide range of cognitive and emotional responses, including attention, engagement, memory encoding, and emotional valence (Yarosh et al., 2021). In neuroeconomics and neuromarketing practice, EEG is often combined with other research methods to make the results more indicative and practically applicable. For instance, combining EEG with eye-tracking glasses can provide researchers with insights into the state of consciousness or arousal level of participants when detecting a specific aspect of a persuasive message
- PET (Positron Emission Tomography) is a brain imaging method that provides a visual representation of brain structures active during scanning, as well as the intensity of their activity. By identifying active brain regions, and assuming the localization of brain functions, it becomes possible to detect cognitive or affective processes that occurred in the participant’s brain during the scan
- fMRI (Functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging) is a brain imaging technique whose scans show the activity of specific brain regions.
- Eye-tracking glasses are specially designed devices used to measure gaze direction, fixation duration, and pupil dilation, all of which correlate with attention, emotional response, and other cognitive processes. They are often combined with one of the aforementioned brain imaging techniques to link the specific content a participant is focusing on with corresponding brain activity or response. More recently, mobile versions of these glasses have been used in in-store research to provide insights into typical product search patterns on shelves, allowing retailers to organize product placement accordingly. It is common practice for “advantageous” locations those where customers are more likely to notice and purchase a product to be priced higher for companies, thereby favoring manufacturers with higher profit margins. Eye-tracking glasses are also increasingly applied in studies of web content usage, providing insights into eye movement patterns and the factors that modulate them.
- Physiological responses such as respiration rate, heart rate, or galvanic skin response (electrical conductance of the skin indicating sweat gland activity) are linked to states of psychophysiological arousal. Temporal correlation of these measures with the subject’s environment or activities can provide useful, though not overly precise, data in neuroeconomic and neuromarketing research.

Neuromarketing research provides a new and deeper understanding of how marketing stimuli (product, price, design, communication) influence the implicit positioning of brands. Based on neuromarketing studies, companies can make brand positioning decisions grounded in consumers’ implicit or objective attitudes, thereby influencing various elements of the marketing and communication mix to make them more attractive to the end consumer (Lukić, 2021). Neuromarketing studies offer an objective insight into factors of key importance for better brand positioning and, consequently, consumer purchase decisions, avoiding reliance solely on traditional research techniques and subjective consumer

opinions. Neuromarketing research on consumer trust in a company or brand can further contribute to developing more adequate marketing strategies for market engagement (Krajnović et al., 2012).

Neuromarketing studies follow a life cycle consisting of several phases to uncover mental states from different biosignals. This cycle begins with defining the research objective and ends with validating that objective (Bazzani et al., 2020). In the first phase of this cycle, the literature identifies three possible goals: improving the impact of advertisements, comparing similar advertisements, and studying the influence of advertisements (Kumar & Singh, 2015).

### **Understanding Consumer Psychology**

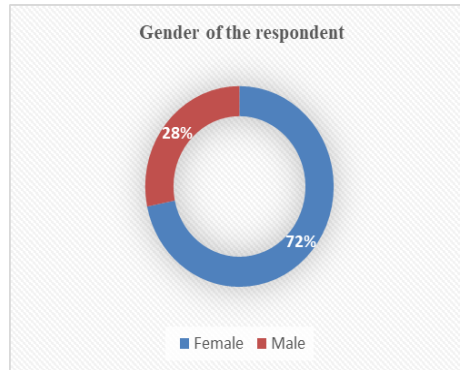
In the context of neuromarketing, consumer psychology, sales, and branding, researching the decision-making processes of consumers presents complex and intriguing challenges. Considering the effects of multicultural influences and social conditions from a global perspective enriches this multifaceted field. The application of neuroscience tools and techniques in marketing and consumer behavior is a new interdisciplinary domain that seeks to understand consumers' cognitive processes, reactions, and selection mechanisms in the context of branding and sales (Kocaçınar et al., 2024). Recently, psychological distance and construal level theories have been attracting increasing attention in research (Yuan et al., 2025).

The effect that certain advertising campaigns, brands, and products have on us as consumers, from both cognitive and emotional perspectives, is evaluated by measuring attention, encoding, and emotional engagement. Since neuromarketing has adopted a range of methods and techniques specific to neuroeconomics, neuromarketing or consumer neuroscience represents a shift from marketing-specific instruments to a set of tools that record both electrical brain activity and metabolic activity (Vlăsceanu, 2014). While appearance and conformity influence consumer attitudes toward products and purchase intentions, research remains inconclusive about which has a stronger impact on purchase decisions, especially in cases involving celebrity endorsements (Wan et al., 2024). Traditionally, advertising and sales strategies have relied on large volumes of data that primarily follow a logical flow of action, focusing on factors such as sales growth of products and services, risk factors, and expected return on investment. Simple quantitative approaches designed to appeal to the rational parts of the brain are effective on their own, yet the psychological dimension offers complementary methods for exciting customers and shifting them from being mere clients to engaged consumers. Earlier, it was believed that reason and emotion were opposing forces in decision-making (Schiller et al., 2025).

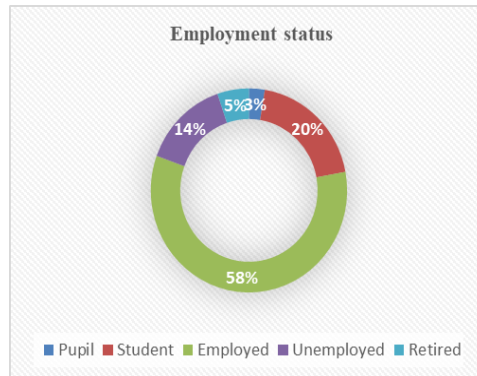
Research conducted on this and similar topics deepens our understanding of consumer psychology surrounding the phenomenon of consumption and provides practical insights for marketers seeking to adapt their products and marketing appeals to consumers' psychological states (Ding & Han, 2024). More specifically, some authors argue that higher levels of consumer understanding from a psychological perspective enhance the consumer experience and outcomes related to consumption, such as satisfaction, loyalty, engagement, and well-being (Flavián et al., 2024).

## Analysis of Collected Consumer Behavior Data

A total of 78 individuals participated in the survey, of which 22 (28%) were male and 56 (72%) female. This distribution indicates a greater representation of women in the sample, which may reflect a higher interest in topics related to consumption and the psychological aspects of shopping. It may also align with the growing “female economy,” which has led to an increase in female-driven aesthetics and gender-oriented consumption patterns (Wang & Dong, 2017).

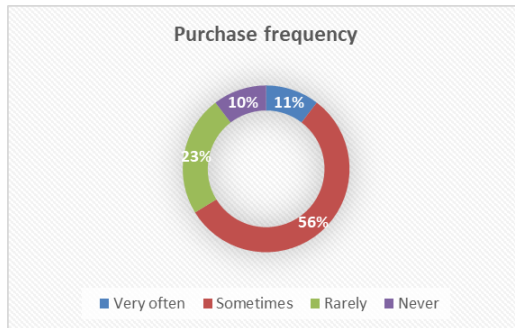


**Figure 1.** Structure of respondents by gender



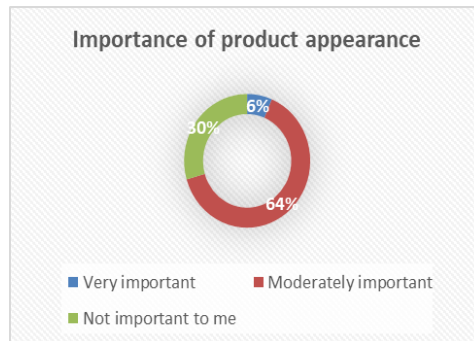
**Figure 2.** Employment Status of Respondents

More than half of the respondents (58%) were employed, which corresponds to the previously analyzed age group (the dominance of 26–35 years). This is particularly relevant as employed individuals generally have stable incomes and make independent purchasing decisions. In contrast, students and the unemployed together accounted for 33% of the sample, indicating the presence of a younger population likely to be more sensitive to prices and promotional campaigns. Smaller proportions of retirees and pupils had limited influence on the findings, primarily due to their reduced financial capacity.



**Figure 3.** How often do you purchase products?

When asked about impulse purchasing, 56% of respondents admitted that they sometimes buy products they do not actually need. This points to the presence of a certain level of impulsivity and emotional reaction, although not a dominant behavioral pattern. Interestingly, 23% claimed they either do so very frequently or never, reflecting a contrast between two extremes of consumer behavior one group acts spontaneously and often gives in to desire, while the other maintains strict boundaries in their purchasing decisions.



**Figure 4.** How important is the product's appearance or packaging?

Regarding product design and packaging, nearly two-thirds (65%) of respondents considered appearance to be moderately important, suggesting that design plays a role, especially when purchasing gifts, trying new products, or choosing between similar alternatives. A more rational group, representing 29%, reported that appearance does not matter, while only 6% viewed design as very important. This indicates that visual elements rarely serve as the key factor in decision-making but can be decisive in categories such as cosmetics, luxury goods, or gifts.



**Figure 5.** Are respondents loyal to certain brands regardless of the price?

In terms of brand loyalty, over 70% of respondents exhibited conditional loyalty—choosing a brand occasionally, depending on whether it justified the price or met expectations from previous experiences. This reflects a modern market reality in which loyalty is increasingly tied to quality, value, and user experience rather than blind devotion. Meanwhile, 21% claimed to have no brand loyalty regardless of price, signaling a rational and flexible approach to purchasing. Only 8% displayed strong loyalty, willing to pay a higher price to remain with their preferred brand. This latter group is especially valuable to companies, as their emotional attachment and habitual loyalty are difficult to displace with competition.



**Figure 6.** Do respondents rely more on reason or emotions when shopping?

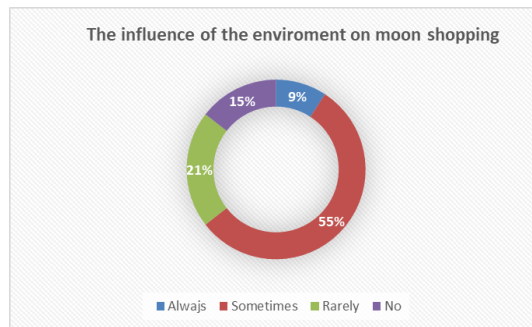
When examining the decision-making process, more than half (53%) stated that their choices depended on the situation. This highlights that consumer behavior is not uniform sometimes purchases are rational (particularly when involving higher amounts or long-term products), while at other times they are emotional (e.g., rewarding oneself or buying on impulse). A significant 38% reported relying primarily on reason, reflecting deliberate and planned behavior focused on price, quality, functionality, and utility. A smaller segment (9%) admitted to being driven mainly by emotions, a group particularly important for marketers since they are most susceptible to emotional branding and visual identity



**Figure 7.** Does mood affect the way you shop?

Finally, regarding the role of mood in shopping behavior, nearly half (46%) acknowledged that mood sometimes influences their purchases, suggesting that emotional states frequently, though not always, affect consumer behavior. A positive mood may lead to impulsive purchases, whereas a negative one can either discourage spending or encourage “comfort shopping.” Furthermore, 17% said mood regularly guided their decisions, confirming the presence of an emotional consumer type. In contrast, 20% claimed mood had no impact,

representing rational consumers resistant to emotional influences. Another 17% indicated that mood rarely played a role in their shopping decisions.

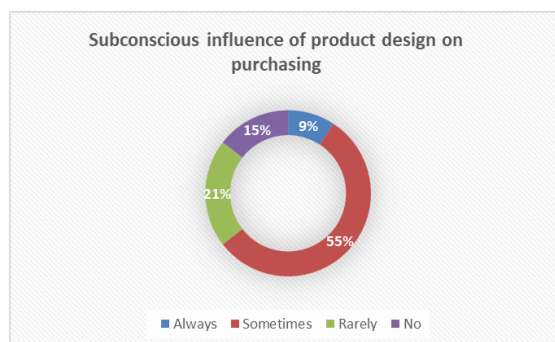


**Figure 8.** Does the retail environment (scent, music, colors) affect mood and purchase decisions?

The results indicate that as many as 50% of respondents occasionally pay attention to ambient elements in the store. This suggests that, while such elements are not always decisive, they can exert a subtle influence on purchasing behavior. This group is susceptible to the so-called subconscious influence of the environment, where pleasant music, appealing scents, and well-organized spaces may increase the time spent in the store and contribute to higher spending.

Furthermore, 17% of respondents explicitly stated that the store atmosphere directly affects their mood and purchasing decisions. These consumers perceive the sales environment as part of the overall experience, which is particularly important for brands aiming to leave an emotional impression through atmosphere.

On the other hand, 19% of participants reported that the ambient environment has no influence on them, while 14% claimed they do not pay attention to such elements. This indicates the presence of a considerable segment of consumers who view shopping primarily as a functional activity, assigning little importance to the surrounding environment.



**Figure 9.** How often do product design, color, and shape subconsciously influence the customer?

These results show that more than half of the respondents (55%) sometimes feel attracted to a product due to its external presentation, even if they are not always fully aware of it. This confirms how strongly visual elements can exert a psychological influence, particularly in cases of impulsive decisions or when choosing between similar products.

Furthermore, 9% of respondents stated that design, color, or shape of a product always subconsciously attracts them, suggesting the existence of pronounced visual sensitivity and emotional response to packaging aesthetics.

On the other hand, 21% of respondents reported that such factors rarely attract them, while 14% stated that they are never attracted by them. This indicates that for a portion of consumers, a more rational approach to decision-making still prevails.



**Figure 10.** How much do you believe the products you buy reflect who you are as a person?

The results show that a significant number of respondents (almost 55% when combining the answers “to a large extent” and “partially”) believe that the products they choose at least somewhat reflect their style, values, and lifestyle. This highlights the importance of the psychological and emotional aspects of purchasing, where a product is not just a functional item but also a symbol of identity.

28% of respondents explicitly state that they choose products that resonate with them on a deeper level, which may include factors such as aesthetics, brand philosophy, production methods (e.g., sustainability), or social status. This group of consumers often develops an emotional bond with a brand and has strong potential for long-term loyalty.

On the other hand, 30% of respondents report that they rarely think about the connection between products and personal identity, while 15% claim that products carry no symbolic meaning for them. This indicates that there is also a group of consumers who perceive purchasing as strictly rational and functional, without emotional identification.

### Conclusion

Consumer psychology is a complex field that explains purchasing behavior through the study of needs, motives, emotions, and decision-making processes. Modern methods such as neuromarketing, which rely on advanced technologies (EEG, fMRI, eye-tracking), provide a deeper understanding of unconscious factors that influence consumers.

The conducted survey on 78 respondents, mostly women aged 26–35, showed that consumers usually plan their shopping but are still prone to impulsive purchases driven by emotions or marketing stimuli. Quality and price proved to be the most decisive factors, while brand and packaging design had a smaller, though not negligible, impact. Discounts and promotions were confirmed as strong motivators, often leading to unplanned purchases.

Overall, the findings highlight the importance of combining theory with empirical research to fully grasp the complexity of consumer behavior. Understanding both rational and emotional drivers of consumption is crucial for effective product placement, brand development, and adapting supply to market needs whether through traditional methods or advanced neuromarketing techniques.

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# PSIHOLOGIJA POTROŠAČA – NAUKA I PRAKSA UTICAJ PSIHOLOGIJE I NEUROMARKETINGA NA PONAŠANJE POTROŠAČA

*Snježana Stanišić<sup>1</sup>*

## **Apstrakt**

*Bihevioralna ekonomija bavi se odnosom emocija i mentalnog sklopa koji imaju uticaj na donošenje odluka potrošača, a sama suština je u mogućnosti procjene vrijednosti određenog događaja i izbora opcija. Istraživanja koja se provode na ovu i slične teme, produbljuju razumijevanje psihologije potrošača koja pružaju praktične uvide prodavcima koji žele da prilagode svoje proizvode i marketinške aktivnosti psihološkim stanjima potrošača. Nakon dobijenih informacija na temu kako potrošači donose odluke na podsvjesnom nivou o tome šta će kupiti, gdje će kupiti, kada će kupiti, u marketingu se uvodi nova naučna disciplina - neuromarketing. A glavni zadatak neuromarketinga je da utvrdi šta utiče na kupca da kupi određeni proizvod ili uslugu. U ovom radu fokus je stavljen na potrošača i njegove reakcije, odnose i emocije kada su u pitanju određene situacije kojima je često izložen. Na tu temu urađeno je i anketiranje određenog broja potrošača koji su odgovarali na pitanja koja većinski imaju psihološki karakter.*

***Ključne riječi:*** *psihologija potrošača, neuromarketing, emocije, bihevioralna ekonomija*

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