

# A Neuroaesthetic Approach to the Search of Beauty From the Consumer's Perspective

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## INTRODUCTION

Consumers pursue hedonism and beauty throughout the decision-making processes regarding purchases and consumption. Even though rationality and functionality are part of these processes, the role of emotions is also evident. The five senses (sensory marketing) will be essential in the aesthetic perception that consumers have in these processes.

Therefore, consumers will go to points of purchase which they consider attractive, such as emblematic shopping streets, shopping malls with magnificent architecture, well-decorated and well-furnished designer brand stores, window displays which show the most important features of a store without being necessary to go inside it, well-lit and tidy supermarkets and so on.

Consumers want the packaging of the products to satisfy their needs of making a gift to other people or to themselves. They also want the color combination to be attractive and to boost their mood or the mood of the person who they would like to please.

The product needs to be visually appealing—we can even think of something as simple as a piece of fruit, or something much more sophisticated, such as a cellular phone.

Advertising strategies (billboards, commercials...) need to stimulate this quest for beauty.

Marketing strategists have been aware of this reality for a long time. However, the new neuromarketing and neuroaesthetic techniques can be useful complements to understand the consumers' quest for beauty.

The objectives of this article are to analyze the aforementioned consumers' quest for beauty, by specifying neuromarketing's possibilities and techniques, and to define the concept of neuroaesthetics and its usefulness.

## BACKGROUND

A good starting point is the research carried out by Wang, Cruthirds, Axxin & Guo, C. (2013) about the essential value of aesthetics in consumer marketing. According to these authors, there has been disagreement among scholars regarding this aspect throughout the years. Nevertheless, this concept is completely accepted nowadays.

Strategic marketing and specific actions on marketing variables are heading in this direction.

As a useful tool to obtain information throughout the marketing process (Ferrer G.G., 2012), market research uses conventional or non-conventional (more innovative) techniques to increase the aesthetic value of the items to be offered to the consumer.

Consumers will appreciate beauty and aesthetics from the moment when the purchasing process begins. Everything will be sensorial stimuli which consumers perceive in a unique and different way. The five senses will become essential and a company's success will depend, to a great extent, on the fact that the individual's sensory sensations are satisfactory.

The product and everything that surrounds it should be aesthetic and beautiful in the eyes of the consumers. Throughout the chapter, the value

of aesthetics in the point of purchase, packaging, advertising strategy and in the product itself will be analyzed.

As we will see throughout the chapter, non-conventional market research about neuromarketing and neuroaesthetics will obtain physiological and biological measurements as a sign of the individuals' feelings: how they perceive advertising, billboards, promotions, packaging, brands, the place of purchase or the product itself.

## **MAIN FOCUS OF THE ARTICLE**

### **Aesthetics in the Points of Purchase**

Concerning the purchase of convenience products, it is usual that consumers look for a good price. However, this is not the only factor that has an influence on the products' purchase. In fact, we can list several aspects which are directly related to a delightful aesthetic combination, such as lighting, well-organized corridors and shelves and a rich combination of smells (Aldana, Serpa, Ortega & Ochoa, 2010). These factors also apply to online shopping, as it should not only be user-friendly and reliable, but also visually appealing.

Something similar will happen with the purchase of products which are not frequently needed by consumers but are more related to personal feelings of self-satisfaction. Consumers will not only see all their wishes fulfilled with the product itself. As a matter of fact, their emotions (quests for pleasure and wish fulfillment) will expand to the act of "going shopping". Such act will be accompanied by a wide range of sensory stimuli offered by the point of purchase (music, smells, possibility of seeing and touching the product, enjoying a specific atmosphere, interacting with the salesperson...) Walking along a shopping street means coming into contact with the landmarks of a city. This does not only satisfy the consumers' wishes to purchase something, but it brings those consumers closer to the world of architecture,

culture, history and art. For this reason, sensory stimuli are not only produced by the business establishment.

The physical marketing channel plays a fundamental role in the consumption and purchasing experience, and it enables consumers to come into contact with the real atmosphere of the brand.

The most important brands have their own stores and extend the concept of brand to the business establishment itself. In this regard, single-brand stores will take special care of the brand image, and this will show in aspects such as window displays, decoration, furniture and the product arrangement.

The concept of flagship store constitutes a usual and powerful tool of communication, which is supported by geomarketing studies. Flagship stores are located in landmarks of big cities, as well as in heavy pedestrian traffic areas, popular with both city residents and tourists. These stores represent the cutting edge of innovation and creative design. The term "flagship" comes from nautical terminology and was used for the first time in the world of fashion to define stores "which can wave the flag with the brand image". These shops' area ranges between 1,500 and 2,000 square meters (approximately 16,000-21,000 square feet) and their architecture brings the observer closer to the world of culture, art and glamour, as flagship stores are often located in renovated and refurbished historical buildings. Their interior displays tasteful decoration, the latest (and some of the past) fashion collections and advanced technologies such as interactive presentations with augmented reality. Other types of services, which increase the experiential and hedonic value in the purchasing process, are offered in these stores. Such services include private areas, spas, art galleries, cafeterias or restaurants, live music, exhibitions, fashion shows, talks and tasting sessions, among other possibilities.

Pop up stores (Lassus & Freire, 2014) are ephemeral nature stores which open for a short period of time and which also belong to the luxury

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