

An introduction to evidence-based marketing



By [Kirsty Dugmore](#)

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Over the past decade, there have been significant advances in the field of marketing and advertising theory and practice. The shift is specifically from traditional armchair theories which are so widely used in marketing to establishing fact-based thinking around the roles of marketing and advertising in the "real world".



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The move is largely due to the application of advanced research techniques grounded in scientific methodology, as well as the integration of science-based disciplines into the field of marketing.

Globally, evidenced-based marketing is gaining traction at a rapid pace. Three key fields influencing the growth of evidence-based marketing include observed consumer behaviour, behavioural economics and cognitive neuroscience.



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These empirically-based studies can help to explain and predict effective communication, giving us the tools and knowledge to execute much better marketing. Effective marketing is crucial, as brands provide the revenue which is the lifeblood of any business. At its core, marketing's purpose is to influence behaviour – so it makes sense to leverage what science knows about human behaviour.

Consumer behaviour

Observed consumer behaviour (OCB) is a measure of in-market, actual purchasing behaviour. The pioneers of observed consumer behaviour are the Ehrenberg-Bass Institute (EBI) – the world's largest centre for research into marketing.

Its website states: “Our team of 50+ marketing scientists are advancing marketing knowledge, busting pseudo-science and marketing myths and teaching marketers how marketing really works and how brands grow.”

EBI has also published a bestselling book entitled *How Brands Grow* by Byron Sharp. This book provides evidence-based answers to the key questions asked by marketers every day. EBI is backed by over 40 years of research, across 30 countries, science, universal patterns of consumer behaviour and establishing empirical marketing laws.



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This promising discipline offers insights into predictable patterns and behaviours and offers practical advice that marketers can implement in their marketing and media strategies.

Behavioural economics has influenced many industries. Originating in economics, it has infiltrated medicine, teaching and politics – former US president Barack Obama established the unit, officially known as the Social and Behavioural Sciences Team (SBST) – and marketing is no exception.

A growing body of evidence demonstrates that behavioural science insights – research findings from fields such as behavioural economics and psychology about how people make decisions and act on them – can be used to design better communication. Buying a brand after all is a decision.

At the heart of behavioural economics is the concept of system one and system two (Daniel Kahneman). The crux of this thinking is the notion that people use instinct, intuition and emotion in all of their choices (system one thinking).

There are many well-respected influencers in this field, a few include Dan Ariely, Phil Barden, Richard Shotton, the IPA.co.uk.

Making (brain)waves

Marketers are enthralled with the possibilities of applying neuroscience techniques to consumer research and have teamed up with brain science experts eager to find commercial applications for their work, giving rise to the new field of neuro-marketing. Neuro-marketing allows us the opportunity to understand how the brain really works and responds to communications.

Most interesting is that although observed consumer behaviour, behavioural economics and cognitive neuroscience are seemingly unrelated disciplines – much of the empirical evidence is aligned. Most notably is that consumers aka humans make mostly snap decisions using cognitive shortcuts. The easier a decision is to make, the better and stronger the brand is.



The implications of this on brand, creative, strategy and media are huge. This is just the tip of the evidence-based marketing iceberg.

By taking the huge body of knowledge gained from data and technology and applying the best evidence-based thinking to the practice of marketing and communications, we are able to equip marketers with the latest proven principles for brand health.

“ *“Evidence-Based Marketing” - newcartoon and post on balancing the art and science of marketing*

<https://t.co/WnF8lEnYVg#marketing> [pic.twitter.com/Au9y8Pk3Xx](https://t.co/WnF8lEnYVg#marketing) — Tom Fishburne (@tomfishburne) [September 30, 2018](#) ”

Essentially we're talking about the importance of using the latest fact-based marketing thinking to equip marketers to do a better job and the need to counter “marketing myths” with more systematic applied thinking.

ABOUT KIRSTY DUGMORE

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