

Understanding consumer behaviour: What have we been missing?

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Despite the fact that it is widely known that a better understanding of consumer behaviour is necessary to yield more successful products, the vast majority of new products continue to fail. One of the reasons for this trend is that classical consumer research methodologies have been mainly focused on rational and conscious behaviour. However, several authors have provided evidence that indicates that consumer choices are largely affected by several mental processes that occur beyond their conscious awareness. Until now, this aspect of consumer behaviour has been almost completely overlooked in consumer science. In this context, this presentation aims to give an overview of the unconscious nature of consumer choices and summarize some of the methodologies from psychology and neuroscience that take into consideration the influence of unconscious processes on consumer decisions and aim to improve our understanding of consumer food choices. In particular, focus is placed on the potential application of projective techniques, implicit associations, eye-tracking techniques and physiological measures. These methodologies seem to have the potential to give sensory and consumer scientists the opportunity to better understand the true motives underlying consumer choices, consisting of a possibility to improve new product development process.