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**POLITICAL COMMUNICATION,
NEUROSCIENCE AND ETHICS: CHALLENGES
FOR THE POWER OF MANAGING AND
PREDICTING POLITICAL CONSUMER
BEHAVIORS**

**COMUNICACIÓN POLÍTICA, NEUROCIENCIA Y ÉTICA:
DESAFÍOS PARA EL PODER DE GESTIONAR Y PREDECIR
COMPORTAMIENTOS DEL CONSUMIDOR POLÍTICO**

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Political Communication, Neuroscience and Ethics: Challenges for the power of managing and predicting political consumer behaviors

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ABSTRACT

In the field of Political Communication, one of the most important tasks is the management of information, it is known that information is power and more so if it is about transmitting information for the creation of messages that may be able to identify with an electoral public, which then leads this to the decision of the voters. Hence, political campaigns seek to invest in the creation of more effective messages for the expected return of a winning candidate. Faced with these new challenges and trends in predicting the behavior of the electorate, a multidisciplinary science called political neuromarketing emerges that, based on specific techniques, messages and stimuli conquer the emotions of its audiences. It is for the above that this research presents a state of the art on the challenges of the power of management and the prediction of electoral consumer behavior under the multidisciplinary approach of Political Communication, Neuroscience and Ethics. Among the most important findings of this new paradigm of political neuromarketing is the presence of technical and ethical dilemmas in practice that must be considered for a framework of action that does not disrupt values and health in the mind of the future electoral consumer.

Keywords: political communication, political neuromarketing, political consumer, ethics in neuroscience

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Comunicación Política, Neurociencia y Ética: Desafíos para el poder de gestionar y predecir comportamientos del consumidor político

RESUMEN

En el campo de la Comunicación Política una de las tareas más importantes es la gestión de la información, se sabe que la información es poder y más si se trata de transmitir información para la creación de mensajes que puedan identificar a un público electoral, lo que después llevaría a la decisión de los votantes. De ahí que las campañas políticas busquen invertir en la creación de mensajes más efectivos para el esperado retorno de un candidato ganador. Ante estos nuevos retos y tendencias en la predicción del comportamiento del electorado, surge una ciencia multidisciplinar llamada neuromarketing político que, a partir de técnicas, mensajes y estímulos concretos, conquista las emociones de sus audiencias. Es por lo anterior que esta investigación presenta un estado del arte sobre los desafíos del poder de la gestión y la predicción del comportamiento del consumidor electoral bajo el enfoque multidisciplinario de la Comunicación Política, la Neurociencia y la Ética. Entre los hallazgos más importantes de este nuevo paradigma de neuromarketing político se encuentra la presencia de dilemas técnicos y éticos en la práctica que deben ser considerados para un marco de acción que no trastoque los valores y la salud en la mente del futuro consumidor electoral.

Palabras clave: comunicación política, neuromarketing político, consumidor político, ética en neurociencia

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INTRODUCTION

In this highly competitive and interconnected world, neuromarketing emerges as an area that offers alternatives to provide solutions in sophisticated consumer markets that are difficult to satisfy or convince (Ferrer, 2009). Hence, Kotler postulated axioms where he establishes that marketing cannot be limited exclusively to company-consumer exchanges, but that there are many possibilities of application (Kottler cited by Misiego, 2011).

Based on the previous statement, it is no exception that the behavior of the electoral market, which has also been a subject of different research and theoretical approaches from different disciplines. The concern of campaign managers is generally focused on knowing what moves or motivates the behavior of voters in an electoral context and becomes an objective of study and analysis by various researchers in the area (Rivera et al. 2017).

Through the market, citizens choose producers and products according to their individual or family welfare or the ethical and political evaluations of the procedures carried out by companies and governments. Today's society in its political actions has awakened to new questions, and citizens now become more sophisticated political consumers who promptly demand results from their public representatives (García Espejo & Novo Vázquez. 2017). In this sophistication of the demand for more conscious citizens, it is necessary to consider that political consumption considers three conditions: behavior (buying or not buying certain products); consumer awareness and motivation (ethical, political or environmental) and frequency and habit, i.e., behavior pattern (Stolle, Hoghe and Micheletti, 2005), for the present study the focus will be on behavior.

It is here where the design of political campaigns becomes more complex and seeks to predict the behavior of their electoral consumers based on new techniques supported by political neuromarketing, which also includes electoral marketing. Based on the above reflection, this paper raises the following questions: What is the relationship between neuroscience and political communication? What is neuromarketing and what science is it based on? Is it possible to know what happens in the mind of the electoral consumer? What ethical implications do the new neuroscience practices have on the political consumer?

METHODOLOGY

This research is a two-phase documentary work where the selection criteria was the search of scientific articles in both Spanish and English, with the following descriptors: Electoral Consumer, Political Communication, Political Neuromarketing, and Ethics in Political Neurosciences.

To fulfill the objective of this research, an analysis, interpretation and classification of authors, concepts and theories on the above-mentioned descriptors is made to build a state of the art where some recommendations for the management of political campaigns based on neuroscience are exposed (Heuristic Phase).

Political communication, political marketing and power

As a precedent of the practice of political communication and marketing, both appear in the United States in Eisenhower's presidential campaign as part of a global initiative planned in 1952 (Maarek, 2009). Regarding this event, Beccassino (2003) states that in the 50's, General Eisenhower was the first American president who delegated the task of communication to specialists, specifically to an advertising agency, and at the same time he hired a movie actor as an opinion leader to train him to manage his personal relationship with the media, in this case with the management of television cameras. As a result, Eisenhower swept Democrat Adlai Stevenson (Beccassino, 2003).

Considering how political communication along with political marketing achieved these results in the case in the conviction of the electoral consumer, the answer to the process is found in the purposes of the disciplines that intervened. On the one hand, in the field of Political Communication understood as the activity that facilitates exchanges and disclosures of information, ideas and attitudes about political audiences, journalists, public opinion, political actors, individuals and specialized institutions (Lennon, 1995). It is then, where political neuromarketing according to some research is directed to analyze the neurological activity and decision making of subjects to use it in the field of political science (Yépez, 2017). From the position of marketing, the characteristics of political neuromarketing is to predict, explain and persuade behaviors in the political consumer, or voter who in conclusion chooses most of the time unconsciously. From here, political campaigns become the key to power by being in the construction of meanings that when exercised in the minds of their audiences is recorded through communication processes (Castells, 2009).

Neuroscience antecedent of behavioral prediction

To better understand the management of political campaigns based on the prediction, explanation, and persuasion of political consumer behaviors, it is necessary to know the background that gives rise to these new marketing techniques.

The first neuromarketing practices were carried out by companies such as Brighthouse and SalesBrain, which offered consulting and research services using technology expertise in the field of neuroscience. Later, in the academy at Emory University, other disciplines continued to carry out studies, among the most representative are psychology, sociology, economics, exact sciences and anthropology; at the same time, some researchers from these disciplines incorporated advances in neuroscience and neuropsychology (Braidot, 2009). One of the applications of Neuromarketing for the purpose of improving the planning, design and costs of the brand's web presence, was the case of BMW with the eye tracking system (tracking glasses) in addition to the use of a galvanic skin response device (biofeedback), where the resulting findings exposed the experiences of visitors in BMW's web spaces (Braidot, 2009).

Neuromarketing then, as part of marketing, seeks to evaluate and analyze the behavior of people after exposing them to a stimulus with the aim of generating some kind of response (Morin, 2011), relying on a set of disciplines that work around the functioning of the nervous system of the human body, which is commanded by the brain, that is, within the academy it has been called the science of the brain. As is known, the brain is triune because it has a reptilian part that is instinctive, a limbic part that works emotionally and a cortex part that is the thinking part, in the case of neuromarketing it focuses mainly on the limbic part (Pedraza Sierra, 2013).

Neurotechniques for consumer measurement

Neuromarketing is part of the fusion of two fields of study, neuroscience and marketing, i.e., while neuropsychology studies the relationship between brain and cognition and their psychological functions; neuromarketing is responsible for observing the value of consumer behavior from the perspective of brain reactions (Morin, 2011). Although it should be made clear that all of the following techniques for audience research were developed for therapeutic purposes, their use has been extended to neuromarketing in order to predict the deeper motivations of consumers.

Despite the novelty of these techniques, market research is still mostly based on conventional techniques, since the use of neural techniques requires very sophisticated and specific equipment, in addition to the high economic costs required for their implementation.

Neuromarketing techniques can be classified into 3 types and these can be used individually or combined depending on the information to be obtained: 1) neuroimaging technologies (Functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging, and Electroencephalography), 2) biosensors (Electrocardiogram, Electromyogram, blood pulse volume, respiration, skin conductivity and skin temperature) and 3) other technological innovations (Axis Tracking, facial recognition of emotions, augmented reality, etc) (Gómez and Patiño, Bandés. 2014) Table 1.

Table 1. Neurotechniques

Neurotechnics	Description	Measurements
Functional Magnetic Resonance	Technique that requires the subject to be introduced into a tube machine, it is based on a powerful magnet, its annual operating costs range from \$100,000 to \$300,000.	It allows to see the neuronal behavior during its activity.
Electroencephalography (EEG)	Non-invasive and silent technique, it is one of the most widely used because it is less expensive than MRI.	Detects very fast neural phenomena generally imperceptible to the naked eye
Magnetoencephalography (MEG)	It captures the magnetic activity of the brain similar to EEG but provides greater reliability. Its use is restricted to the medical and clinical field.	Measures magnetic activity of the brain from impulses or spontaneous responses.
Electromyography (EMG)	Carefist describes it on its website as a technique that measures muscle reactions in response to a given stimulus.	From electrodes it is possible to observe the reaction of the muscle to a certain response in order to deduce the meaning of such changes in the muscle, once the subject is exposed to a video or a political campaign.

Facial Action Coding System (FACS)	This technique is based on computer packages that measure psychological expressions; there are very complete taxonomies that classify microexpressions. This technique is less complex to use and its costs are lower.	Reports changes in facial features by observing audiences listening to a political speech.
Eye Tracking (ET)	It is an eye-tracking technique that allows to follow the consumer's gaze, the subject must wear glasses. However, it is difficult to apply outside laboratories..	Report any changes in eye movements.
Electrical Dermic Activity (EDA)	Technique that yields psychophysiological data with a high degree of sensitivity. The recordings also depend on other individual and situational factors.	Correlation is sought between electrothermal with certain emotional states of the subject.
Sociograph o EDA	In the field of social neurosciences is a technique can digitize the psychophysiological record in real time by individual sensors connected to the hand of each subject designed by the University of Salamanca.	Explains social behavior from an interdisciplinary framework.

Source: Personal proposal based on (Gómez and Patiño, Bandés. 2014).

The field of neuroscience according to statements by Christophe Morin (2011) despite rapid technological advancement, has failed to penetrate market research in academia due to two factors:

- 1) First, very few researchers have a formal training in neuroscience knowledge,
- 2) Second, market researchers are afraid of criticism against privacy and ethics issues that are handled with these new techniques.



Political neuromarketing or emotional neuropolitics

Political neuromarketing has the same fundamentals as emotional political neuropolitics, reverse political marketing. Pedraza (2013) classifies the information on Neuromarketing applied to politics in: origin and emergence, definitions, components and processes of application of techniques, such as those exposed in the previous section.

Pedraza argues that there are two components of political neuromarketing that interact to give it meaning: neuroscience and political marketing. Since it is known that emotions are determinant in consumer decision making, neuroscience has taken an important role (Pedraza Sierra, 2013). First, in describing the cognitive processes and second, in finding the true motivations in consumer decision making, in which not even they themselves often do not know, such as unconscious reactions, incentives and even social group pressure, neuroscience techniques allow marketers to probe the brains of consumers to obtain high-value information and information about the subconscious processes that explain why a message finally succeeds or fails (Morin, 2011).

Political neuromarketing is a tool that aims to exercise power through the construction of messages in the minds of the public, these messages will contain mental meanings and are communicated through stimuli that go directly to the brain to make the connection with people's own emotional meanings and consequently achieve an empathy that leads to the objectives of consent of the candidate's ideas. "Political neuromarketing investigates and studies the conscious and meta-conscious brain processes that explain the perception, behavior and decision making of people in the fields of action of political activity" (Braidot 2011, quoted by Pedraza 2013:9).

In the search for new strategies to ensure that messages remain in the memory of consumers, marketers have focused their marketing management at the center of human thought, i.e. in the brain (Machaca. 2014). According to Schreiber (2011) Neuropolitics is based on a set of techniques that, with means, stimulate the channels of reflection to anchor the right strategies that allow the candidate or party to achieve the goal set in the minds of the voter.

Decisions, neural techniques and ethics

The management of new neural techniques of prediction and motivation of electoral consumers will not be sustainable in the future, if we do not pay attention to what has caused political marketing as a social

phenomenon and current expression of a crisis in the exercise of power, which is manifested by two fundamental causes: one, the attrition caused mostly by the exercise of power without fulfilling campaign promises, and two, the bureaucratization of state institutions (Baena, 2001)

On the other hand, the remarkable role of public opinion in the exercise of the value of freedom and conduct in the democratic system, bills directly to the influence that technology can come to play in the moment space to form or direct public opinion, can Neuroscience fulfill the promise that Political Neuromarketing becomes "buy or vote button" arouses interest to continue with this thematic area that deserves further deepening in decision making (Feenstra and Pallarés, 2017).

CONCLUSIONS

Neuroscience has opened new possibilities due to the quality and accuracy of the information it provides on the predictability of behavior that is mostly based on touching the consumer's emotions to choose one or another service. However, political neuromarketing is still a new field in academia and even more so, in the exercise of campaign design.

The documentary findings invite us to extend the line of research in more depth, especially to the new political consumers, citizens already considered as a sophisticated demand of today's society due to their environmental, political and ethical awareness, this is the challenge of today's power, to make efforts not in the sense of manipulation or empathy of messages with the electoral consumer but in building plans that give a coherent response to the most pressing citizen needs.

At an ethical level, neuromarketing can become a very powerful tool in the field of political campaign development, if values such as respect, freedom and the psychological health of the electorate are not left aside.

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