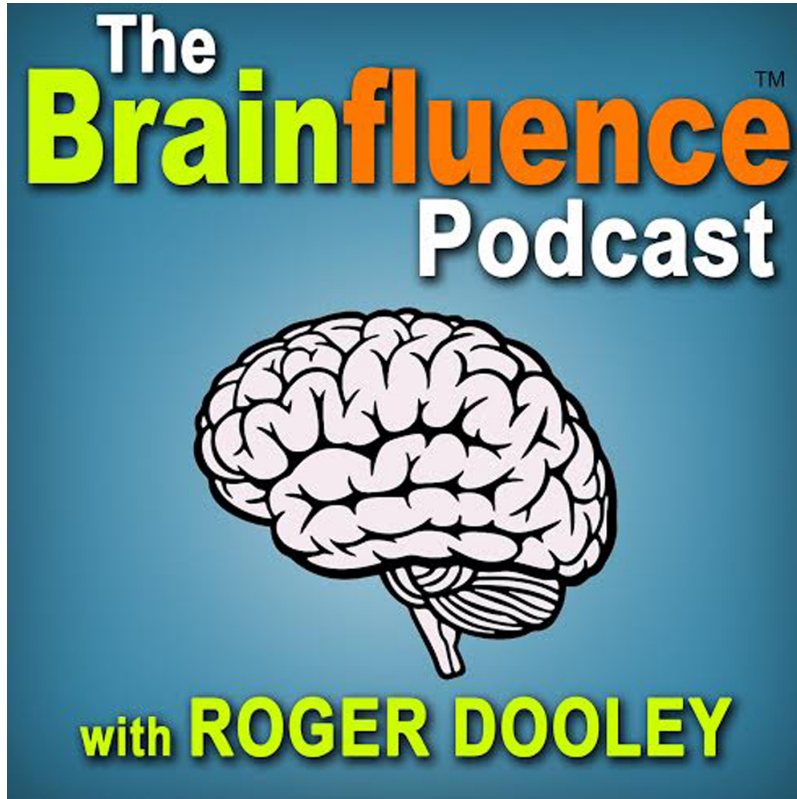


# Scoring Presidential Debates with Neuromarketing Tools

<https://www.rogerdooley.com/presidential-debates-varan>



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host



# Roger Dooley

The Brainfluence Podcast with Roger Dooley  
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Welcome to Brainfluence, where author and international keynote speaker Roger Dooley has weekly conversations with thought leaders and world class experts. Every episode shows you how to improve your business with advice based on science or data.

Roger's new book, *Friction*, is published by McGraw Hill and is now available at Amazon, Barnes & Noble, and bookstores everywhere. Dr Robert Cialdini described the book as, "Blinding insight," and Nobel winner Dr. Richard Claimer said, "Reading Friction will arm any manager with a mental can of WD40."

To learn more, go to [RogerDooley.com/Friction](https://www.RogerDooley.com/Friction), or just visit the book seller of your choice.

Now, here's Roger.

Roger Dooley: Welcome to Brainfluence. I'm Roger Dooley.

More than 10 years ago, I wrote about a secret neuromarketing lab set up by Disney, the media and theme park giant in my hometown of Austin, Texas. It seemed quite mysterious at the time. Today's guest was a driving force behind setting up the lab and designing the techniques it would use. Today the lab isn't secret and it's no longer exclusive to Disney, so we can learn more about it.

Duane Varan is a PhD and CEO of MediaScience, a leading provider of lab-based audience and marketing research with labs in Austin, Chicago and New York City. He's won numerous academic awards including the Australian Prime Minister's University Teacher of the Year

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award. Duane has lectured in over 150 cities worldwide and has author of over 50 peer-reviewed papers. Duane's led the Advertising Research Foundation's landmark NeuroStandards 1.0 initiative, and founded Beyond :30, one of the world's largest and longest-running consortiums, exploring the changing media and advertising landscape. And lastly, and perhaps most importantly, Duane is known as the champion of transparency and validation of neuromarketing methods.

Welcome to the show, Duane.

Duane Varan: Oh, thanks. It's a pleasure to be here.

Roger Dooley: Yeah, Duane, I have to ask, you began your career as an academic by spending nine years studying the effect of introducing television to people in the Cook Islands.

Duane Varan: Oh my God. Yeah, that was quite a while ago.

Roger Dooley: Yeah, yeah. It's an interesting start. Everybody has an interesting backstory in the neuromarketing business, like nobody was a born neuromarketer. But I'm curious, what did you find happen there? I take it there was initially no TV and then you were able to observe the changes.

Duane Varan: Yeah, the background ... What was so perfect about this was television was being phased into the Cook Islands, island by island. And so I saw that as a very unique opportunity to study the effects of television on a whole population with a perfect natural experiment.

Now this has been tried before. USAID did a huge project in Indonesia, I think it was in the '70s, where they took two

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villages in the middle of the Indonesian jungle and they introduced television to one village and not to the other. And these American anthropologists kind of like parachuted in, I mean not literally, but they dropped in and they set it up and they did the baseline measures and then they left and they came back a few years later.

And the problem that they hadn't anticipated was that it was supposed to be a perfect control treatment, kind of like comparison. But what had happened was the people in the village that didn't have television learned that if they just put their antennas really, really, really high, they could pick up the signal from the other village.

Roger Dooley: Ah. There goes control group.

Duane Varan: So the whole experiment was destroyed.

And then there was another natural experiment which was done in northern Canada among these native communities there. And this was published in the Journal of Communication as the smoking gun that proved that television was evil, because they did ... It was a similar thing at the start of the study. No television in either village, then one village got it and the other didn't, and then eventually both did.

And when the one that got it, that the mid-point of the study, you know, when one got it and the other didn't, the impact on the community was just devastating. Children became much more violent, their eating habits changed ... You know, all these horrible, horrible, horrible things that television was presumed to do happened. And they

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published this journal and it was kind of like the smoking gun that television really is evil, you know?

But the problem was a couple of years later, the other village eventually got television, and none of the things that had happened in the first village happened in the second village.

Roger Dooley: Hmm. So what did you find in the Cook Islands?

Duane Varan: So in the Cook Islands, I found a lot of different things, but one of the most interesting areas of research ... And my research was around the cultural impact of television, and I talk about four different processes that happened. So I explained that cultural impact is not as simple as something like cultural imperialism, like a one-way flow. Actually, some of the most interesting stuff that I found in my research was that the power of contrast awakens your own cultural identity. And so there were many aspects of local culture which became stronger as a result of the introduction that's television.

Roger Dooley: Hmm. Yeah, I wonder if anybody's ever thought about a study like that for smartphones. It would be a little bit like now because smartphones are just pervasive on the planet, but-

Duane Varan: Yeah. Well, you're probably right. When new technology comes, there is an opportunity there. We were lucky, of course. I was lucky with my study because television was still relatively isolated, and so you could still study a population in the world which didn't have television. But

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now that's just impossible in today's world, so it's a lot harder to do today than it was then.

Roger Dooley: Right. So how did you get from indigenous culture to neuromarketing, Duane?

Duane Varan: Well, actually a lot of it, a lot of my training was really grounded in those days. What was really cool about the research was it was a whole-of-population study, so it wasn't a sample. I was actually studying at census level, entire island populations.

But really, what, everything that I have done in my entire career is really about the power of experimental design. Even the neuro work that we do, it's really more about the power of experimental design to isolate variables.

And that's really the problem. Analytical research is often very noisy because you just have so much that's happening that you're not controlling for. And so you don't know kind of like what's driving what, what other factors might be present. There's just a lot of nuisance variables there that you just have no control over.

So I've always really loved the power of being able to study any phenomena that you're interested in with the benefit of experimental design. And experimental design is just a godsend for really getting not only at what is happening, but far more importantly, why the things you think you're studying are really happening the way they are. You get at the why, not just the what.

So I've just loved the power of experimental design. And I still love it. I mean, it's still the core of what I do every day.

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Roger Dooley: Mm-hmm (affirmative), yeah. So Disney somehow found you in Australia and engaged you to set up what's now Media Labs.

Duane Varan: It was a funny story.

Roger Dooley: Yeah, how did that happen? I mean, there were a lot of people working on neuromarketing stuff in the States and in Europe then. How did they connect with you?

Duane Varan: Well, so I was leading a academic research center. It used to be called the Interactive Television Research Institute and then it became Audience Labs.

And the Beyond :30 project that you talked about was a project that we did where basically, we studied new ad models. Just to give you an example, 2005, so gosh, almost 14 years ago, we did a study looking at how video ads would work on mobile phones. And at the time there were no phones in the market that could do video ads. So what we did to test the idea was we used an iPod Classic as a proxy for the phone of the future. And we had video, we had programs with ads in them on the iPod Classics, and we also had them on full-screen television sets. And what we discovered in that study was that a video ad on a mobile phone was just as effective as a TV ad. I mean, it was landmark in 2005. And that was one of the Beyond :30 studies.

So there were a lot of these studies that we were doing at the university, at Murdoch University, where I was at the time. And this center was a large center. I mean, I had a large team, I had my own building on campus, so it was

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an established center. But we had a lot of industry sponsors for our research, and ABC and ESPN, which are both owned by Disney, were both sponsors that research. And so they would see the results from the research early. And they loved the style of research that we were doing. They loved the measures, of course the neuro measures that we were incorporating, but they also loved the rigor of the experimental design that went with it.

So, just to make a long story short, in 2008, it was actually on Mother's Day when I got the call. I got a call from the good folks at Disney, and they said, "Duane, in five days' time, at the Upfront, we're going to announce that we're going to be doing a lab initiative. And we've decided that we want you to run it. And so we have five days to negotiate a deal with you."

Roger Dooley: No pressure.

Duane Varan: And I said, "I don't even have a lawyer." And they said, "Well, you better get a lawyer."

And so we negotiated for five days. And I demanded terms that I thought were just impossible for them to meet. I mean, I said, "Look, I have no money. I'm just an academic, so you would have to pay for it. But I can't be your employee, because my research has to be independent, so it would have to be a business. I would have to own it. I would have to own the IP. I don't want to leave the university. I don't want to leave Australia." I mean, my list just went on and on and on and on. And they said, "Yeah, that's all fine." They said, "But we have

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one condition." And I said, "What's that?" And they said, "The condition is that for your commercial research, you can still do your academic research, but for your commercial research you have to be exclusive to Disney."

And so that was the deal that we crafted. And so for our first five years, the Disney Media Lab, it was exclusive to Disney. And then after five years we came out of our exclusivity window. And that's when MediaScience really began growing and expanding from just being Disney.

And it's been a great journey. I mean, it's just been a dream come true for me. I really had a great time. I ended up retiring from academic life entirely in 2015 because I couldn't juggle kind of like both roles anymore. So when MediaScience kind of got too big to kind of continue doing that then I had to leave academia. But it's been a great journey. I've loved every minute of it.

Roger Dooley: Yeah, I've always found Disney to be pretty smart when it comes to understanding human behavior. In some of my speeches, I've used a clip from a 1941 propaganda cartoon they made called Reason and Emotion-

Duane Varan: Wow.

Roger Dooley: And I'm sure you've been exposed to that. It's a representation of how people's brain works, and it has two people sort of arguing things out inside the person's head.

There's this accounting-looking guy who represents reason, a very rational decision-maker. And then there's a caveman who's emotion. And they fight it out in response to different stimuli coming in from the outside world, and

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walked by an attractive woman and the caveman goes crazy and throws the accountant out of the driver's seat and takes over driving.

And this was way before Kahneman's System 1, System 2 and a lot of what we understand today about how people make decisions. But they got it even back then.

Duane Varan: Yeah. Well, Disney I think has been rare in that they have long understood the power of emotion. And I think of course these days it's common knowledge that really emotion drives our behavior much more than our rational decision-making. But they've always had the benefit, I think, of thinking at a very emotional level, which has been very powerful.

Roger Dooley: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Yeah. So moving on to neuromarketing today, at MediaScience, Duane, what technologies do you currently use?

Duane Varan: Well, our philosophy ... We're very agnostic on methods. We believe all methods serve the purpose, and we like to understand the relative strengths and limitations of all methods.

And so we have a lot of different measures. We do skin connectivity, also called galvanic skin response. We do heart rate. We do blink analysis. We do facial expression analysis. We do response latency. We do EEG. We're not huge fans of EEG, so we do it when we think there is cause for it, but it's not something that we do every day of the week, where most of the other measures are. We do eye tracking. Gosh, we have over 200 eye trackers

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across our labs. So we do a lot of eye tracking work, different kinds of eye tracking systems for different kinds of challenges. So those are the kinds of measures that we do regularly. The only measure that we don't really do is fMRI, of course, which has a lot of practical kind of challenges to incorporate.

Roger Dooley: Right. Well, you're very ... Even though it's used for academic studies and for commercial purposes, it's got limited application so far.

Duane Varan: And we also really ... We have a very strong view on minimum sample size kind of questions, and so we wouldn't be interested in doing fMRI with samples of 10, which is kind of how you often see it done. We would really need a proper sample, which even with something like fMRI would still be around 50 for us at minimum. So there's just a lot of challenge for us moving into the fMRI domain.

But the rest of the domains, I think we do very, very well and we're very comfortable with.

Roger Dooley: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Duane, you've been involved in various tests that were meant to provide sort of an independent evaluation of different neuromarketing techniques, like the neuro standards study and so on.

I'm wondering if there was anything from those studies that surprised you?

Duane Varan: Oh, of course. I'm surprised every day. I think there's two journal articles that I've been a coauthor on. I'm very proud of the fact that I'm coauthor on these two kind of

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like bookends, because one of the articles, I think, is the ambassador for the real promise of neuromarketing. It's the journal article that I'd recommend anybody put before a client if they want to say, "Neuromarketing works."

Roger Dooley: What's the title of that, approximately? We'll link to that in the show notes.

Duane Varan: Gosh, that's a great point. I've got to look up the title. They're both in Journal of Advertising Research. One of the two articles that I'm talking about won the Journal Article of the Year Award a few years ago. The other one was the runner-up. They're both good articles. I'll send you the links to them if you'd like to pass them on.

Roger Dooley: Great, okay. We'll be sure those are in the show notes for folks who want to dig deeper. In fact, I think I've already found those. And I was surprised that some ... In the conclusions there was something called a management brief or management short or something like that's next to there's a summary, an abstract, and then there's sort of a plain English, "Here are the main takeaways." And one of the takeaways was pretty cautious, as I recall, about neuromarketing.

Duane Varan: Well, so that's the other one. So hold off on that for a second, Roger.

Roger Dooley: Okay, okay. We'll let you go. Go. Good news first.

Duane Varan: So this is the promise one.

So the background in this, this is something that we did in collaboration with the Ehrenberg-Bass Institute at the

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University of South Australia. Great, really a global leader in the marketing science domain.

What we did is we did this for Mars. And Mars has really good single-source data on the performance of their ads.

We were blind to that data. So they had ads for which they knew what the sales impact ultimately was of the ad. And we were blind to that. And what we had to do was use our measures to estimate what the relative performance of the ads would be without knowing what their actual sales impact was.

And what was great in that study was survey research was only about 54% accurate in kind of picking successful ads, which was really not a lot better than chance, which is really shocking when you think about the implications. We have a multibillion dollar industry that is trading on very flawed kind of information away.

The neuromarketing measures, again, I can't remember the exact number, but it was something like 74% so it was a huge improvement. So that's a great article, kind of like saying neuromarketing works. It's giving us a significant advantage over more traditional methods that are available today. So that's a great article on one side. So again, the ambassador for "neuromarketing works," this is ... If you want it to persuade a client that "Hey, neuromarketing is something you could consider," this is probably the journal article you'd want to give them.

Now, conversely, there's another article that we've also written, that I'm also coauthor of, which has within it the

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subtitle No Common Truth. And that's the perfect ambassador if you want to be a critic of the neuromarketing industry and if you wanted to say, "This is all voodoo and none of this stuff works."

And what's most remarkable in that is there are eight ads that are analyzed by eight different vendors. And what we demonstrate is that there is no point in time when any two vendors agree on what's going on. So it's really quite shocking. So it's not like it's a window to the soul. The decisions you make about how to analyze the data are absolutely critical to the results you ultimately get.

And this is the reason why at MediaScience, we're such champions for transparency. We hate black box. We think black box is just evil in this industry because once you go black box, there's no accountability in the industry. There can be no accountability in the industry. It's not as simple as measuring it. How you do it is critical. And the client deserves to see that because it's central to the decisions they're making. So we believe that transparency in neuromarketing is absolutely critical. If a vendor is not willing to be transparent with their methods, we believe that they should not be given the business. There's just no accountability in that equation from that point forward.

Roger Dooley: Right. I think one key point to for our listeners, Duane, is that when you ... We talk about, well, gee, is EEG better than some other biometric measurement or something? But in fact, even if you have three providers who are doing EEG or biometrics, they may end up with very different results because the way they interpret it ... They may be measuring similar data, but the way they interpret

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that data could be totally different. And so that's a real cautionary note, I think.

Duane Varan: Yeah, and many of us love this ... It was a poster study. So it's not even a full journal article, but there was a great study that was done by a student, actually, who put a salmon in the fMRI machine, and he analyzes its viewing of ads and draws conclusions. I mean, it's just absolutely hilarious.

Roger Dooley: It was a dead salmon too, as I recall.

Duane Varan: It was a dead salmon, yes.

Roger Dooley: Yes.

Duane Varan: And I mean, it just talks to you about the power ... You would know this with normal stats anyway that the decisions that you make affect ... Whether you're dealing with the abnormality of the sample distribution or not ... I mean, all of those decisions affect ... You can imagine that once you start talking about neuro measures, which you know are at the millisecond level, you're really ramping up the possibilities for how to get the data to reach different kinds of conclusions. Whether you calibrate for the individual difference, all that kind of stuff, there's a huge range of factors that are at work there.

And it's okay that people will do things differently, but it's not okay to hide behind a black box with it. There has to be transparency in our industry. And the failure to do that, I think, holds us back.

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Roger Dooley: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Duane, do you think we'll get to a point where there's some kind of standardization or certification process where somebody can say, "Well, yes, I offer consumer neuroscience testing and I've got XYZ certification that shows I have demonstrated that I know what I'm doing"?

Duane Varan: I think it's unlikely. There's so much different kinds of stuff that you could do. It's not one measure. It's many, many, many measures. I doubt that there would be that level of standardization.

But I think clients increasingly are becoming smarter. They're a lot smarter today than ... They know a lot more about the industry than they did 10 years ago. A lot of them will get their own consultant, which I think is a great idea. I think it makes a lot of sense for a client to go to their local university and get somebody just to look over the shoulder on some of this stuff.

So I think there are things that we can do just to become more critical and more skeptical, which I think we should be of the measures. But by the same token, they're very powerful. And this is just the beginning. They just get better and better potentially over time. What we're able to do with these measures is going to get more and more exciting. So you don't want to not do it, but you just want to do it responsibly.

Roger Dooley: Right. I want to shift gears a little bit, Duane. We are recording this on the same day as one of the early debates between the Democrats running for president of the United States. You've been looking at debates for, I

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think, a couple of presidential election cycles already. How can neuromarketing techniques help measure how these candidates are registering with voters?

Duane Varan: Well, it's remarkable. I mean, what we see in the biometric data in a debate is just so revealing, so phenomenal.

During the 2016 elections, we did the debates. And I was at conferences before the election, saying, "Look, everybody is saying this is landslide to Hillary. That's just not what our research is showing. Our debate research is showing that, while that's all true on all the rational measures that we have, the emotional measures tell a completely different story."

And there was just so much that we could see in the data that was fascinating, around kind of like the Trump effect that has really played out ever since then, in terms of the Trump presidency, around ... Very unique things like, for example, one of the things that we saw with Trump was this incredible desensitization that occurs over the course of the debate.

So what I mean by that is ... I'll give you a really good example. There was a debate last time, which was kind of a quasi-debate, which was the Commander-in-Chief Forum, it was called, which was kind of before the debates. And one of the things that Trump was kind of arguing in that was that we should have seized the oil fields in Iraq, that we were in Iraq and as a conquer we should have seized these oil fields. I mean, it's a pretty extreme kind of argument. But what happens is of course

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it's occurring a lot later, towards the end of his portion of the debate. And what we saw was that the intensity of people's reaction, and this is Democrats as well, we tested Republicans, Democrats and undecideds. And the intensity, even of Democrat reactions, diminishes over time with Trump. So you have this desensitization effect that's happening, which was remarkable.

The sex tapes ... You remember the Entertainment-

Roger Dooley: Oh, the grabbing women one?

Duane Varan: Yep, yep. So you remember that was a part of the second presidential debate? Totally a gender issue. For women, it was the peak of the debate. They were highly engaged. It's evoking very strong kind of responses. Men are looking for the exit door. That topic is such a turnoff for men. There it just dropped. And actually it was remarkable in that debate, because normally we see men and women being pretty much even or varying throughout. But that just disengaged men. It took a lot for them to get back into the debate after that, which was remarkable.

Roger Dooley: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Well, so Duane, if you're measuring engagement, what does that tell you about how people might actually vote? In other words, could a viewer be engaged with a candidate that they don't like because that candidate is saying things that annoy them and causing them to pay attention? Or can you differentiate between this or the people are viewing it positively or negatively?

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Duane Varan: Sure, sure. So we wouldn't use the word "engagement." We're really measuring the intensity of a reaction. It could be positive, it could be negative.

What we used for the direction, the valence as we call it, was we used facial coding measures for that. So the combination of the biometrics, the EDA and the Fisher coding was really telling us the direction of the intensity of their reaction.

And that was very ... That was interesting, but in a surprising way, because what we discovered in the debate was just how much Democrats hated Hillary. And that was the big surprise for us.

Normally what we see is supporters of a candidate are very enthusiastic when there's candidates talking, and they display a lot of those negative emotions when the opposition is speaking. But what we saw ... I mean, of course we saw negatives when Trump was speaking among Democrats, that wasn't surprising. But we frequently saw very strong negatives when Hillary was speaking.

And for us, what that signified ... And again with Republicans, it wasn't like that. Republicans actually responded really well to a lot of stuff Trump was saying. So that for us translated into what we thought would likely be a major enthusiasm gap. Republicans were a lot more gung-ho even though they weren't willing to talk about it publicly. And even their survey measures were much more muted than their actual emotional responses were.

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But Democrats, even though they were saying positive things about Hillary and the survey responses, the biometric data was really, really just how much they disliked Hillary. And so that was going to be a problem.

So again, a lot of really fascinating data that you see that you just can't see through traditional measures.

Roger Dooley: Mm-hmm (affirmative). How pervasive would you say the use of neuromarketing techniques is by political campaigns, either individual campaigns or by political parties to try and craft their messaging, figure out what's working and what isn't, as opposed to the more typical, traditional types of gathering data?

Duane Varan: Yeah, I don't think that it's pervasive at all. I think it's still very much undiscovered in these domains.

Now, we will not work with political candidates. So the reason that we don't do that is because we don't want to taint our objectivity. So we are prepared to tell the story however it lands, and we don't believe that we've done anything, which kind of tilts our credibility one way or the other. So for us it's really important to maintain that space. So that's the reason why we would not engage with the campaign directly, for example.

Roger Dooley: Right. Well, certainly there are some companies that take a different approach, right?

Duane Varan: Sure, sure, sure. But even we ... With what was really great research, we had a hard time persuading networks to actually put it on there. And they would say things like, "That's the best debate research we've ever seen." But

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they really struggled with going the next step and putting it on air. I don't quite know why. I think there's perhaps a discomfort with feeling like they don't know it well enough to be able to talk to it. I'm not sure where the barrier is, but it is not common or pervasive in the political arena yet.

Roger Dooley: Mm-hmm (affirmative). It's kind of surprising because there's so much money sloshing around in the bigger campaigns that you would think that ... You know, they're spending who knows how much just on polling? It would seem to be a no-brainer to do a few neuromarketing studies to see, okay, what are people really thinking?

Duane Varan: Well, and also you would think that there would be a lot of disillusionment with traditional methods. We had our election in Australia recently. The poll results were just absolutely off the mark. That was the case again with the 2016 ... I mean, you would think that there would be a hunger for better ways of trying to understand what's going on.

And then also, Roger, the other thing is, personally I find the post-debate analysis superficial. I mean, you have people ranting opinions for days and days and days after debate, with really no evidence-based data to kind of understand what really happened in the debate.

Roger Dooley: Well, you worked with ESPN, right? Isn't that the same in sports? Where before the big game you've got a week of commentators predicting what'll happen, and then the game comes around and of course none of what was

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predicted happens, and then afterwards they all have great explanations for why it happened.

Duane Varan: Yeah. I would just hope that with ... I mean, certainly with debates, there's a better alternative. And it would be nice if we saw a little bit more kind of like systematic analysis of what really happened during the debate rather than just people pontificating with their opinions, you know?

Roger Dooley: Right. I think the danger with political campaigns is that ... While people have always said that some politicians simply play to the polls, whatever they think the people want to hear is what they say. And a neuromarketing study could play right into that, and people could just sort of choose the hot buttons that had the most emotional resonance with people, as opposed to actually acting on their principles what presumably we'd like our politicians to do. Not blow with the direction of the wind, but to believe in something and be consistent.

Duane Varan: And there's a lot that's scary when you look at the biometric data. When you hear people on a rational level, for example, talking about immigrants, they say what's politically correct. When you look at the biometric data, you see a very different footprint. You see a lot of far more negative sentiment towards immigrants than people will articulate.

Roger Dooley: Well, there's a lot of unconscious bias-

Duane Varan: There's a lot of unconscious bias, yeah.

Roger Dooley: I think that people don't ... Yeah, they don't ... They legitimately believe that they do not have bias. But

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there've been plenty of tests that show that everybody has bias and it's pretty much hard-wired into our brains.

Duane Varan: Yeah, no, that's right. And with undecided voters, for example, in the 2016 election, it was really fascinating as well because they responded very well to Trump's decisiveness. So when he would say things like, "In my first hundred days I'm going to do this," even though rationally they might think, "Oh, he's just lying," "It's full of crap," or whatever, emotionally they responded really well to that kind of decisiveness. So it's just an example. There's so much that you start to see when you look at the debate at a biometric level that you just can't see relying on people's stated responses or dial responses, for example.

Roger Dooley: Yeah. Even before the results for 2016 came in, I wrote an article, I think it was either on my blog or probably at Forbes, about Hillary's messaging and Trump's messaging, specifically on immigration, which you just mentioned.

And Hillary's messaging was this complicated nine-point program that addressed all these different important policy issues. You know, a path to citizenship for some, and changing specific programs with acronyms that probably nobody had ever heard of before.

Duane Varan: Yeah.

Roger Dooley: And Trump said, "I'm going to build a wall, a big wall." And as you say, rationally, Hillary had a much more nuanced approach, but wow, at the basic emotional level,

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people could visualize a big wall. They may not visualize the same wall, but they could have a sort of mental picture of a hard barrier that solves the problem in one simple, you know-

Duane Varan: And that's exactly what you saw in the data, Roger. That's exactly what you saw in the data. What we saw was spikes and a strong response when Trump said, "My first hundred days," among undecided voters. But among the same undecided voters, when Hillary began going into her techno speak, dropping ... You know, dropping, dropping, dropping. No resonance, you know? No resonance with that. It was remarkable.

Roger Dooley: Yup. Duane, let me shift gears one more time here. One last question that I might shed some light on. You know, in the beginning neuromarketing was mainly something used by big brands with big budgets because they could afford these studies. But we've seen some of these technologies getting less expensive. What advice would you have for a smaller-scale company that wants to go beyond traditional market research methods and use some kind of neuro method?

Duane Varan: Well, the costs of neuro have dropped drastically. I mean, what they cost five or 10 years ago was really something that was limited to what only the really big brands and big networks could really afford. But it's much more comparable now to traditional methods in that sense. So really the cost is no longer the barrier that it once was.

But the expertise is still a little bit of a barrier. So the problem is you're still dealing with something that people

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haven't heard about, they might not know a lot about. So there is that element. It's not a cost problem now, but it's more like a knowledge gap.

And there are new solutions that are coming out that are going to be even cheaper over the course of the next year. So I don't think that that cost is the barrier anymore.

Roger Dooley: Right. And certainly tools like eye tracking are very accessible now. You can do-

Duane Varan: Very accessible, yeah.

Roger Dooley: Not particularly good online eye-tracking studies for a couple of hundred bucks. And really, that only gives you partial information. It's not really delving into people's psyche. But it's more information than you had if you did not have that eye-tracking study and just assume that you knew what people were going to be looking at when they're looking at your ad or your poster or whatever.

Duane Varan: Yeah, for sure.

Roger Dooley: So let me remind our listeners that our guest today is Duane Varan, CEO of MediaScience and neuromarketing researcher.

Duane, how can people find you?

Duane Varan: Well, our website is mediasciencelabs, with an S, dot com. I'm on LinkedIn as well, so people want to reach out, they're welcome to reach out through LinkedIn. But yeah, probably the website's the easiest way to find us.

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Roger Dooley: Great. Well, we will link to those couple of places and any other resources we talked about on the show notes page at [rogerdooley.com/podcast](http://rogerdooley.com/podcast). And we'll have a text version of our conversation there too.

Duane, thanks for being on the show, especially all the way from Australia.

Duane Varan: There you go. Thanks.

Thank you for tuning into this episode of Brainfluence. To find more episodes like this one, and to access all of Roger's online writing and resources, the best starting point is [RogerDooley.com](http://RogerDooley.com).

And remember, Roger's new book, *Friction*, is now available at Amazon, Barnes and Noble, and book sellers everywhere. Bestselling author Dan Pink calls it, "An important read," and Wharton Professor Dr. Joana Berger said, "You'll understand Friction's power and how to harness it."

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