

Subliminal advertising assignment

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Objectives ??? To study subliminal advertising using secondary resources. ??? To study live examples of subliminal advertising and understand the implications of it. Literature Review The Concept The term “subliminal” is derived from the construct of a “limen of consciousness”, a threshold or line separating conscious from unconscious. The concept dates back to the literal beginning of psychology as an empirical science separate from philosophy in the seminal writings of Johan Friedrich Herbart (1776-1841).

Herbart argued that ideas (i. e. , both perceptions and thoughts) differed from one another in strength, and inhibit or suppress one another in a dynamical fashion, competing with one another to achieve enough strength to rise above the “limen of consciousness” and, hence, be consciously experienced. Pratkanis and Greenwald identify four types of subliminal stimuli: (1) sub threshold stimuli, which are presented at energy levels that are too weak to be detected by the audience (e. . , flashing the words “Eat popcorn” onto a screen so quickly that the audience is not aware of them), (2) masked stimuli, which are hidden from the audience by the presentation of some other, overriding stimuli (e. g. , briefly presenting the stimulus immediately followed by a bright flash of light), (3) unattended stimuli, which are presented in such a way that the embedded figure is unlikely to be segregated from its figural context (e. g. hiding the figure of a naked body in the curves and lines of a picture of an ice cube), (4) figurally transformed stimuli, which are words or pictures blurred or distorted to the point that they are unrecognizable (e. g. , commands recorded backward and inserted into popular music). (Pratkanis, A. R. (1992). The cargo-cult science of

subliminal persuasion. The Skeptical Inquirer, 16(3), 260-272.) Ideas below the line still exist, in this view, and through collateral inhibition can influence what other ideas, including themselves, are subsequently consciously experienced.

In this way, perceptions obtained only subliminally (i. e. , below the “ limen of consciousness”) can still affect what we experience consciously (i. e. , think about) and how we behave. It is this idea or something very similar to it that informs most popular discussion of subliminal persuasion or perception. Yet, except for Freudian psychology (which is not a credible scientific theory of perception or cognition), few models of perception and cognition take such notions seriously.

Contrary to the common caricature of psychology in the popular media, no modern theory posits “ an unconscious”, that is, a mind-entity separate from consciousness such that perceptions, ideas, beliefs and desires can slip or exert influence from one to the other. Rather, perceptual and cognitive processes can and often do occur without our awareness and without our having to or, in many cases, even being able to consciously control them.

Subliminal messages target the subconscious mind and may be generated in the form of an image transmitted briefly and not perceived consciously and yet perceived unconsciously. While the conscious, rational mind acts as a filter and screens out messages not consistent with our beliefs, the subconscious mind accepts messages without filtering them – rather like the mind of a child. The effects of subliminal television advertising could be even more powerful on children.

It's been found that for each additional hour per day that a child watched television an average of one additional request was made for an advertised product. In 1963 Barber & Calverley (1963) found that children between the ages of 6 and 12 were more susceptible to hypnotic-like suggestions than were adults. A review of studies on suggestibility of children reveals that children seem to be more susceptible to suggestive questions in an interview situation. (Is there an effect of subliminal messages in music on choice behaviour?)

Egermann, Kopiez et al. Journal of Articles in Null Hypothesis. Vol. 4 No. 2. Page 34) Origin of Subliminal Advertising The most widely known claim concerning the power of subliminal advertising was made in 1957 by James Vicary, a market researcher. He claimed that over a six-week period, 45, 699 patrons at a movie theatre in Fort Lee, New Jersey were shown two advertising messages, ' Eat Popcorn and Drink Coca-Cola', while they watched the film Picnic. According to Vicary, a message was flashed for 3/1000 of a second once every five seconds.

The duration of the messages was so short that they were never consciously perceived. Despite the fact that the customers were not aware of perceiving the message, Vicary claimed that over the six-week period the sales of popcorn rose 57% and the sales of Coca-Cola rose 18. 1%. Vicary's claims are often accepted as established facts. However, Vicary never released a detailed description of his study and there has never been any independent evidence to support his claims. Also, in an interview with Advertising Age in 1962, Vicary stated that the original study was a fabrication.

The weight of the evidence suggests that it was indeed a fabrication.

(Subliminal Messages. John R. Vokey. Psychological Sketches. Page 240)

Another market researcher who made very significant findings was Wilson Bryan Key. In his books such as *Subliminal Seduction* and *Media Sexploitation* he claimed subliminal sexual symbols or objects are often used to entice consumers to buy and use various products and services. One of Key's most famous claims is that the word sex was often embedded in products and advertisements.

For example, he claimed that the word sex was printed on Ritz crackers and was embedded in the ice cubes of the drink shown in a well-known ad for Gilbey's Gin. According to Key, despite the fact the embedded words are not consciously perceived, they are unconsciously perceived and can elicit sexual arousal which in turn makes the products more attractive to consumers. Belief in the power of subliminal perception to induce changes in the way people feel and act is so widespread that a number of companies have been able to exploit this belief by marketing subliminal self-help audio- and videotapes.

The companies that market these tapes claim that regular use of the tapes can cure a variety of problems and aid in the development of many skills. There are five ways to embed worded messages in music: First, the target words or messages are placed in the music below the auditory threshold and are, thus, masked by the music; second, it is possible to use words with an inverted time-structure (so-called backward masked messages) and mix them above the perceptual threshold (Walker, 1987); third, backward-masked messages can also be used subliminally; fourth, highpass-filtered <https://assignbuster.com/subliminal-advertising-assignment/>

worded messages (containing frequencies above 15 kHz) can be used (so-called “ silent-subliminals”); finally, time-shrunk subliminal messages (played back twice as fast as recorded) can be hidden in the music. (Subliminal Messages. John R. Vokey. Psychological Sketches. Page 244-246) Effects of Subliminal Advertising The premise of subliminal perception has been that the unconscious mind can receive information presented below the threshold for conscious perception. The result may be attitude and even behavioral change based on information that the individual is not consciously aware of receiving.

Some psychology studies have shown the effects of subliminal perceptions on the affective responses, and, in other research, experiments have shown that subliminal stimuli can influence high-level cognitive processes, including preferences for geometric shapes, liking of individuals, personality judgments, and ratings of one’s self-concept. In addition, recent investigations suggest that subliminally presented stimuli can influence behavior. However, the empirical studies directed toward investigating subliminal effects have failed to show conclusive results in an advertising context.

Hawkins’ finding of increased thirst ratings following subliminal exposure to COKE have been used as empirical evidence that subliminal advertising can directly affect consumption-relevant behavior. However, Beatty and Hawkins who conducted a replication study of Hawkins’ found no significant differences in the mean thirst ratings. Moreover some evidence suggests that subliminal messages may influence affective reactions to marketing stimuli. For example, it was found that sexually suggestive subliminal

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embeds in an ad significantly increased upbeat feelings and significantly increased negative feeling.

However, it was said that even though clearly, subliminal embeds have some influence on the audience, it appears to very subtle and to consist almost entirely of effects on feelings rather than cognitive measures. And it added that the effects on feelings scales are in opposing directions and may cancel each other out, and concluded that traditional ad measures such as recall, attitudes toward advertisements and attitudes toward brands have not been sensitive to the possible effects of subliminal advertising. (Moore, T. E. (1997).

Scientific consensus & expert testimony: lessons form the Judas Priest trial. American Psychology Law Society News, 17(1), 3-14.) Positive Effects of Subliminal Advertising Subliminal messages are culturally relevant signals that are designed to pass the normal limits of perception in order to influence a person. It empowers advertisers to attract target audience to remember the products and services without being too pushy. Subliminal messages are also designed to help people develop quick thinking in any given situation so that they can act accordingly.

Subliminal messages could be more useful in priming a target audience to choose one brand over another, rather than in creating an actual need for the product. And such messages have a greater effect on children. Negative effects of Subliminal Advertising Subliminal stimuli are usually so weak that they are not perceived by observers, and even if they are, they are usually nullified by other, strong stimuli present at the same time. People are very

much in control of their own overt responses to stimuli, and hence, even if they perceive subliminal stimuli, they can screen out any attempts to effect undesired behaviour.

Silverman mentions certain conditions upon the fulfilment of which subliminal advertising can be successfully used. These are (a) the wish to be heightened by the subliminal stimulus must be unconscious, (b) the message must be subliminal, (c) to be effective, the presented stimulus must precisely match the unconscious wish in psychological meaning. In addition, the advertiser should be careful indeed to assure that the desired responses are expressible in a socially acceptable way. However, various marketers have criticised these conditions as these do not necessarily make such advertising successful. The Effects of Subliminal Advertising. [www. ciadvertising. com](http://www.ciadvertising.com)) Praises and criticisms of Subliminal Advertising There are various criticisms as well as praises which are associated with subliminal advertising as a tool used by marketers to promote their product. The major issue of subliminal advertising is whether consumer exposure to subliminal stimuli can effectively manipulate the behavior of consumers and provide advertisers with a tool to bypass consumers' defenses without their being aware of what is happening.

While one can be vigilant towards things that are visible and audible, we cannot be sure about monitoring or curbing things like music, color and the fragrance, which send out subliminal messages. To illustrate color, Chinese restaurants use a lot of red while designing the ambience. Red is known to stimulate hunger, hence useful for any restaurant. A departmental store uses a variety of fragrance, which also is a powerful means to communicate <https://assignbuster.com/subliminal-advertising-assignment/>

subliminal messages. A very serious problem is the reaction of the public to having subliminal advertising thrust upon them. Hidden Persuasion) There is concern over the idea of advertising that affects people below their level of conscious awareness. People are uneasy about subliminal advertising because they feel “ they are not able to exercise conscious control over their acceptance or rejection of the messages. ” Many people are against the use of subliminal advertisements and argue that it is an unethical and a harmful technique. Though subliminal scare many, they are sometimes marked as a desirable means of contracting and tinkering with the subconscious. There are many positive aspects to some subliminal techniques.

An example of this is tapes which aid people to loose weight or stop smoking. In turn, they have become a popular self-help fad and are used widely. The first form of the criticism is that advertising manipulates and deceives consumers through subliminal advertising. This is based on the assumption that we are motivated by unconscious urges and instincts that we possess innately; we are determined to act the way we do because of internal stimuli. According to Freud, the id is our warehouse of primitive and impulsive drives, such as the drives for thirst, hunger and sex.

Advertising, the critics say, taps or triggers these impulsive drives in ways of which we are unaware. Advertising, consequently, deceives, defrauds and manipulates unwitting consumers into changing their tastes to conform to the desires of the greedy, selfish producers. Our conscious minds functions purely on reason and logic. It does not allow anything that is against what it is programmed to believe. The subconscious mind instead is not judgmental

and accepts all information. Children are most vulnerable to this powerful technique when used in advertisements.

Research has shown that if children watch television one more hour than the usual timing, they ask for at least one more of the products that has been shown in the ads. Does subliminal seduction always work? Subliminal seduction has been noted as the most frequently used form of subliminal advertising. In 1970s, Wilson Bryan Key wrote a book ' Subliminal Seduction and Media Sexploitation' which talked about the use of sexual connotations in promotional material of Gilbey's Gin, Camel cigarettes, Walt Disney Cartoons and Ritz Crackers.

The effect cannot be pin pointed but what forces one to probe deeper into the subject is that all the aforementioned companies have been market leaders in their segment at some point of time or the other. Can subliminal seduction then be justified? Can it be said that the subconscious gets aroused by hidden sexual messages and leads people to approve of the product? Sounds eerie but the facts ' Does Sex always sells? Common claims are that the word sex is often embedded in products and advertisements. The use of sex in advertising does not always work well.

This is illustrated through the Pepsi Cool Can advertisement. The Pepsi Cool Can: In 1990, Pepsi actually withdrew one of its " Cool Can" designs after someone protested that Pepsi was subliminally manipulating people by designing the cans such that when six-packs were stacked at grocery stores, the word SEX would emerge from the seemingly random design. Critics alleged that the red and blue lines on the " Cool Can" design were far from

random. This can be seen in the following picture. Subliminal advertising can prove costly. Subliminal advertising can in many cases prove expensive to the company, in case it fails.

This is clear from the example of the RATS advertisement which cost the company a lot of money. The 'RATS' ad: In September, 2000, two democratic senators asked the Federal Communications Commission for a review of the Republican National Committee's ad. It was discovered that if the ad was slowed down, the word "RATS" appeared clearly on the screen in large, white letters superimposed over the words "The Gore Prescription Plan" while an announcer criticized Gore's prescription drug plan. In a fraction of a second, the word disappeared, and the words "BUREAUCRATS DECIDE" showed up in smaller letters.

The "RATS" advertisement ran more than 4,400 times in 33 markets nationwide in two weeks, costing the RNC more than \$2,576,600. Similarly, the advertisements which are not able to send the intended message across and are overshadowed by the subliminal message also cost the company a lot. A good example of this is most of the advertisements which use sexual appeal to sell their product. In most of the cases the product gets overshadowed by the subliminal message. Findings: The use of subliminal advertising has always been refuted but it is still practiced in some form or the other that is beyond the control of the law.

A good marketer will always know what will entice his consumer and he will mask it in a way that can be comprehended (even if subconsciously) by the intended user. Moving a step ahead, apart from marketers, many universities

and colleges have implemented subliminal methods in their teaching methodology. So whether to regulate the use of such messages or not, is debatable till we have the requisite scientific evidence to prove the effect. But, all said and done, it gives an added dimension to the world of advertising.

Our purchases may be influenced by messages which go beyond conscious perception and provide the necessary impulse to buy, leading to increased sales. Despite the official stance, subliminal messages are effective and can positively benefit a product's sale if used properly. Advertisers and media have been using them for decades and if they were not effective, subliminal messages will not be used and money would not be spent on creating them. Subliminal advertising whether it works or not, will no doubt be utilized indefinitely by companies to advertise their products. Live Examples Duracell Battery

Duracell Batteries is an example of a company which has used subliminal advertising for its campaigns. The Duracell Bunny is pink with an orange and black dress. Some advertisements used by the company has been shown as screenshots below. Advertisement 1 The advertisement is based on the concept that Duracell batteries give extra time and extra power. It starts with these messages and ends with the same with the story having been built into the middle. It starts with a football stadium. The stadium is fully packed and the audiences are excited. The excitement is due to the football match.

The match is between the Duracell Bunnies and Ordinary Bunnies. The Duracell Bunnies are powered by Duracell batteries and the Ordinary Bunnies are powered by other brand of batteries. The advertisement then shows that the Ordinary Bunnies are sitting on the ground. They are shown to be tired and as lacking in energy. On the other hand the Duracell Bunnies are shown to be vigorous and all charged up. They are energetically doing warm-up exercises. The match begins. The Duracell Bunnies lead right from the beginning. They are shown to be scoring goals continuously. All the Duracell Bunnies are playing tirelessly.

The Duracell Bunnies maintain their go-get it attitude till the end of the game. On the other hand, the Ordinary Bunnies were shown to be less energetic right from the start of the game. They are shown with tired and exhausted faces. Even though they are trying to defend their position against the Duracell Bunnies, they are not able to do that because they are losing power. They form a strategy to work in a team to beat the Duracell Bunnies and so form a chain. The audiences are tensed at this move and are expectant. But the Ordinary Bunnies lose power at the same time and fall dead on the ground.

The match is won by the Duracell Bunnies. Now the message ' Extra Time Extra Power' is flashed on the score board. The message conveyed is that to win you need that extra power or inspite of being extremely good you need to have the extra power to succeed. Advertisement 2: The advertisement is about the mountaineering trip of a group of Bunnies. In the group one of them is powered by Duracell and the other bunnies are powered by other

brands of batteries. They are shown as a group standing at the bottom of the mountain and looking up towards the top.

All of them want to reach the top of the mountain. They start climbing. The Duracell Bunny leads the team since the start of the tip. One by one, all the Ordinary Bunnies loose power. The Duracell Bunny is the only one that reaches the top. Having reached the top, the Duracell Bunny pulls up the others who had passed out due to lack of power. The advertisement conveys that Duracell gives you the power to not only beat your competitors and reach the top but also to stay on the top. Analysis of the advertisements: Duracell uses subliminal advertising in most of its campaigns and in all countries.

The context of the advertisement might be different and the message it is trying to emphasize could also be different. As an example, the first advertisement was run in Germany and the second in the United Kingdom. India has had exposure to both the advertisements. Following a different concept altogether and without using the Duracell Bunny, the company had another advertisement. In this, they showed a hatching of a egg. Cameras were placed around the egg to capture the chicken breaking out of the egg. One camera was powered by Duracell and the others by other brands of batteries. The cameras were continuously clicking.

But only one lasted till the time that the chicken had come out of the egg. The Duracell Camera caught the picture of the chicken. Hence in all of the above instances, the Duracell advertisements have been of using subliminal advertising. The image projected is of the Bunny or the Camera and Duracell

is an integral part of it. The rationale behind choosing the images is that in the case of a toy bunny everyone knows that they run on batteries. Hence when a moving toy bunny is shown and when it stops or keeps moving, everyone immediately thinks of and relates it to the battery used in the toy.

The connection is direct, simple and easy to relate to. This is the same for a camera. When the flashing of a camera stops it immediately strikes the viewer that the battery has lost its power. Here too the connection is easy to perceive. Duracell has associated itself to sports in the first two advertisements. Though different kinds of sports have been shown, the focus is on the winning and losing that is part of any game or sport. In the first advertisement, the message that the company wanted to emphasize on ‘Extra Time Extra Power’ was flashed on the screen twice.

But in the later advertisements, though the message was the same, it was not flashed in the advertisement. It was spelt out by the video and the narrator also says it but it is not written explicitly. So we have studied the way that subliminal advertising has been adopted by Duracell. Fair and Lovely Advertisement: Fair and Lovely is an example of a company which has used subliminal advertising for its campaigns especially in India.

Alongside are few of the screenshots of the advertisement. This advertisement is 44 second long. The storyline of the advertisement is that the female lead is on a cricket ground trying to examine the pitch.

She is a beautiful and well dressed lady. She then starts reminiscing her old days when she used to do commentary for kids playing ‘gali cricket’ and she is shown as a dark and not so attractive girl. She also used to practice

commentary at home for matches that would come on TV. It was just another day when her sister noticed and handed over a Fair and Lovely tube to her. The female lead (Genelia) understands the purpose behind it. She transitions to a fair and attractive girl. She then auditions for commenting alongside Kris Srikkanth for a match and is picked for her talent and good looks.

The story then moves to present from flashback and she is shown feeling happy. She is walking towards the commentator room. She is then showed doing commentary and being noticed by one and all for her talent and great looks. She emerges out successful and the crowd hogs around her for her pictures and autographs. In the end a two second shot of Fair and Lovely tube is shown. Analysis of the advertisement: Fairness has been a taboo subject in the Indian subcontinent. Everyone wants a fair child, a fair wife, a fair husband and fair filmstars, is so very obvious.

The matrimonial advertisements that come out in the newspapers are a case in point. Not a single advertisement doesn't mention the fairness needs for a groom or a bride. There is a hidden need in everyone to look fair and attractive. It is this mentality that has been leveraged in this advertisement. Women make a lot of endeavors to look good. They are also very career oriented these days. This factor has been very well used in this commercial. The need for the dark and unattractive girl to become fair has been communicated below the line. This has not been communicated explicitly.

Situations like the devotion of the female lead towards commentary field and her hidden desire to become a commentator have been used to convey that.

The only barrier as perceived is her not so attractive face which can be changed by using the product within a particular time frame. And her transition gives her the success she had always yearned for. This way the commercial has aligned the career needs and beauty needs of a woman.

Conclusion Subliminal Advertising is used by many companies to promote their products. It is the method of advertising where the stimulus is below the perception of the audiences or consumers.

On one hand, there are criticisms against the use of subliminal advertising. But there are evidences to believe that using subliminal messages in advertising works in favour of the brand. To study about the effects of subliminal advertising and to understand how it works, we had taken two examples of advertisements where this concept was used. The advertisements of the two brands have been studied. Some criticisms that subliminal advertising has come to face is that they hide sexual meanings. It has been accused that many marketers use normal and regular advertisements to hide unnecessary and potentially harmful messages.

But when subliminal advertising is used in a constructive way, the advantages from them can be extremely useful. For example, subliminal messages can help in building brand connect. From the two live examples considered, we can see that use of subliminal advertising can be in varied forms. In the first brand, Duracell, a bunny was used to convey the message. What the bunny did was attributed to the battery it was powered with. In the second brand, Fair & Lovely, a young girl is used to convey the message. The success of the girl in her career is used to convey the effectiveness of the product.

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Though both the advertisements are different in context and the way subliminal advertising is done is different, the use of the concept has worked as both the campaigns have been successful. References 1. Pratkanis, A. R. (1992). The cargo-cult science of subliminal persuasion. *The Skeptical Inquirer*, 16(3), 260-272. 2. Is there an effect of subliminal messages in music on choice behaviour? Egermann, Kopiez et al. *Journal of Articles in Null Hypothesis*. Vol. 4 No. 2. Page 34 3. Subliminal Messages. John R. Vokey. *Psychological Sketches*. Page 240 4. The Effects of Subliminal Advertising. [www. ciadvertising. com](http://www.ciadvertising.com) 5. Moore, T. E. (1997). Scientific consensus & expert testimony: lessons form the Judas Priest trial. *American Psychology Law Society News*, 17(1), 3-14. 6. <http://www. iift. edu/iift/MasterPs/Master%20P's %20-%20March. pdf> 7. <http://www. wordofmouthexperiment. com/articles/subliminal-messages/subliminal-messaging-ad-world> 8. http://www. ciadvertising. org/student_account/spring_01/adv391k/hjy/adv382j/1st/effects1. html 9. http://www. ciadvertising. org/student_account/spring_01/adv391k/hjy/adv382j/1st/effects1. html 10. Advertisements from www. youtube. com