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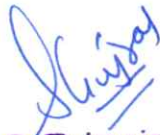
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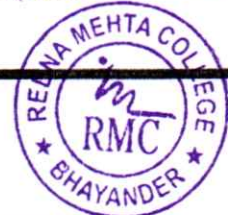
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I/C Principal
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 Commerce & Mgt. Studies
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12. Subliminal Advertising : Utilizing Deception to Influence Consumption Habits

Mr. Frank Remedios

Assistant Professor, Reena Mehta College of Arts, Commerce & Management Studies.

Abstract

Cartoons, advertising, music videos, and even movies, all contain hidden meanings. These are subliminal messages used in commercials targeted to a certain audience to influence unconsciously made choices. Such marketing is usually thought to be unethical and, in some situations, even illegal. Most of the information available, points to the possibility that people do, to some extent, receive subliminal messages that might affect their behaviour. Subliminal viral messages are used to sway consumers. Most human psychology experts agree that people cannot be persuaded to behave in ways they would not consciously choose to do on an unconscious level. A thorough analysis of the significance of subliminal messages in affecting behaviour is still pending. Although studies on subliminal advertising are scarce, this study conducts a critical assessment of the ones that are already out there and asserts objectively that subliminal advertising cannot be a successful strategy to persuade people to follow any goal, as sought by the marketers. The current study deals with psychological factors that influence specific conduct while also examining the proposed issue in light of research. Such elements cover the function of just exposure, threshold ideas, and their ensuing impact on behaviour. All of these factors have received theoretical discussion, and their research implications have been examined. While reiterating the thesis, this study highlights the theoretical and practical issues that prevent subliminal advertising from becoming a successful marketing tactic. This study concludes by highlighting potential future research areas that might produce the desired outcomes and qualify as an alternative to conventional marketing strategies.

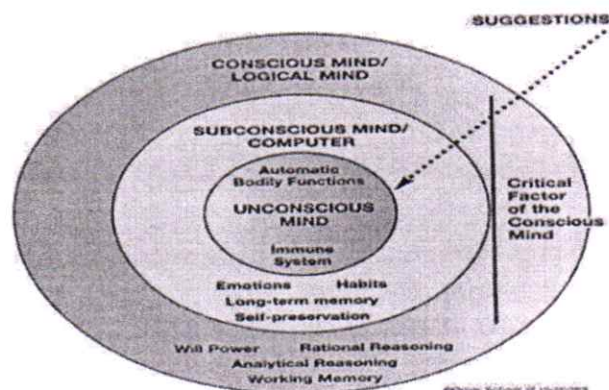
Keywords: Subliminal advertising, Unethical advertising, Marketing, Ethics

Introduction Customers mistakenly believe that they intentionally pick the behaviours that guide them through their life, giving them the impression that they routinely decide how to behave. However, studies demonstrate that behaviours can be initiated just by the observation of cues that are linked to such behaviours. For Eg according to research by Carver et al. 1983, saying words associated with aggression can make people act more aggressively. Without the

respondents' conscious knowledge, their behaviour was changed. Every day, consumers are bombarded with tens of thousands of commercials, therefore it is in their best interests to comprehend how they work. The current notion of "subliminal advertising" is consistent with the idea of changing consumer behaviour by using subliminal, unseen persuaders in adverts.

The Latin word "limen," which meaning "threshold," is where the word "subliminal" originated. According to Webster's dictionary, the term "subliminal" implies "being or operating beyond the threshold of conscious perception." The phrase "subliminal advertising" refers to a marketing strategy that employs signals or cues that customers do not consciously detect but that are registered and retained in their subconscious brains. "Without the consumers' conscious knowledge, subliminal advertising exposes them to images of products, brand names, or other marketing stimuli. Consumers are said to process information after being exposed to subliminal marketing stimuli and act on it without being able to recognize a communication source " (Trappey, 1996).

Figure 1.1 portrays the levels of the human mind and how the suggestions contained in subliminal advertising target the subconscious mind of the subject.



Source: <https://tse4.mm.bing.net/th?id=OIP.Vu2uEhB4MaAvuDfIA08LwHaHY&pid=Api&P=0&w=300&h=300>

How did it all begin

James Vicary experiment in the theatre: James Vicary claimed to have flashed the words "eat popcorn" and "Drink Coca-Cola" on a movie screen for 1/200th of a second, every 5 seconds during the movie **Picnic**

Resultant consumer behaviour - popcorn sales increased 58% and Coke sales increased 18%.

Subliminal marketing is not a novel concept. However, it is not widely known by customers (Lucia Wang,2017). Individuals are surrounded by a variety of media today, which means that a wider range of subliminal messages and their effects on the subconscious of people are also present. The majority of researchers concur that the subject of subliminal messaging is fascinating (Vokey, Read, 1985). Researchers have shown that in order to safeguard consumers' interests, subliminal advertising practices must be disclosed to them. The influence of subliminal advertising on customer behaviour has been well studied. Some people continue to contest the reality of subliminal perception in spite of countless discoveries regarding its effects. The impact of subliminal advertising on customer behaviour, however, is the subject of an ongoing debate among experts (L. Hsu et al. 2020).

This essay aims to provide answers to various concerns, including whether people are aware of subliminal signals, how they feel about them, and how much they affect people's views and behaviour.

Subliminal influence on consumer behaviour

People who have been influenced and brainwashed cannot see the manipulation or indoctrination (Ayrapetova, 2020). Consumers are readily made into the objects of persuasion, indoctrination, propaganda, brainwashing, and conditioning in the forced consumerism environment. Many observable behaviours, ranging from transient semantic impacts to serious effects on emotions and human behaviour, are proved to be impacted by subliminal stimuli. The line between what a customer perceives consciously from what they experience subliminally is a perceptual one. Indoctrination into the culture has an impact as well. Numerous studies have shown that the perceptual limit is controlled by mental stress, anxiety, and comprehension of the world. An individual's ability to perceive on a conscious level decrease as their degree of stress rises, making them more open to subliminal inputs. People experience a wide variety of information on a conscious level when tensions diminish, making them less vulnerable to sublimates. An individual's likelihood of really perceiving sublimates decreases with more effort.

Objectives of this research paper

These issues are what the study tries to solve. The following research questions were developed in response to these research problems:

1. Do advertisers employ subliminal cues in their ads?
2. If so, how much are the customers aware of this practise?
3. Do consumers believe that employing covert messaging in commercials is a morally acceptable practise?

4. Do consumers' feelings, perceptions, and purchase intentions change as a result of subliminal advertising?

Significance of the Study

This study is important for consumers and marketers alike. Few individuals are aware of the concept of subliminal advertising (Asiamah et al. 2017), hence this study tries to increase awareness of the concept. The idea that subliminal marketing affects customer behaviour is currently being investigated. There are inconsequential bits of data that support the idea that subliminal advertising has an impact on customer behaviour, but there is also plenty of evidence to refute such assertions (Sofi et al. 2018). Regardless of whether or not subliminal advertising affects consumer behaviour, it is essential for individuals to be aware of any information—both subliminal and supraliminal—that is put in front of them as customers. This research aims to raise people's understanding so that their right to privacy as customers is not compromised.

We shall take into consideration the studies carried out by Kunst-Wilson, Zajonc (1980), Seamon, Brody, and Kauff (1983), as well as Bonano and Stillings (1986) in regards to the experimental findings relevant to the subject. Despite the fact that these trials had nothing to do with consumer research, several academics believed that the results had significant marketing ramifications. The trials of Hawkins (1970), Cupperfain and Clarke (1985), which were thought to have an immediate and quantifiable impact on marketing communications, will be researched.

All of the results that have been classified as "subliminal" are not simply magical occurrences; rather, they have their origins in various psychological processes that may be used for purposes other than only "subliminal."

It has also been shown that as the time elapses, the subjective reaction grows and the recognition memory declines.

Let's immediately apply subliminal signals to the setting of advertising now. As we've already mentioned, it is crucial for the advertiser to provide a clear threshold level by which the stimuli will be evaluated whether they are to be considered "subliminal" stimuli. Using this method straight from the lab presents us with a few more challenges. It is crucial that we use subliminal in a real-world setting since, as we have seen, all of the data on the subject is based on laboratory tests. The likelihood that any effort to transmit subliminal signals will be unsuccessful is significant if there is any supraliminal message active.

Source of data

Secondary data is used for the purpose of this study.

Secondary data is compiled from published sources including journals, periodicals, novels, newspapers, and other publications. A variety of websites were also used in the research.

Conclusion

Subliminal advertising's impact on customer behaviour has long been a contentious topic. The idea that subliminal advertising affects customer behaviour is supported by substantial data, although several studies have also empirically demonstrated the antithesis of this idea. This means that a subliminal stimulus also creates a significant change in the way an individual perceives an advertisement.

To completely sink into the subconscious minds of the consumers, subliminal messages can take up to 7 days to 6 months (Alison Silver, 2020). The reason why few researchers have denied the effectiveness of subliminal advertisements on consumer behavior could be the fact that a lot of those researchers did not consider the 'time' factor associated with the effectiveness of subliminal messages (Liwei Hsu, Yen-Jung Chen, 2020).

Research showed that a subliminal stimulus loses its effect if the subject is aware of such a stimulus (Shakil et al. 2018). Therefore, measures must be taken to create awareness amongst the consumers. Also, the marketers must be careful while using hidden messages in advertisements because the consumers do not want to be manipulated. The study has elaborated on the cases where subliminal advertising has been used without jeopardizing the interests of the consumers. Hence, marketers must be very careful with the practice of subliminal advertising.

The entire findings of this study may be summed up as follows:

1. The idea of subliminal advertising is true and has been used in the advertising and marketing sectors for a very long time.
1. Although subliminal messages can be utilized for good, there is a considerable possibility of their being exploited for manipulation.
2. While there is evidence that subliminal advertising has an impact on customer behaviour, this evidence is not conclusive. Each person responds to subliminal messages differently. One person could be very susceptible to subliminal messaging while the other person might not be. The receptivity is influenced by a number of interrelated elements. As a result, each individual's response to subliminal advertising is different.



3. Subliminal messages can enter a person's subconscious right away or over the course of up to six months. As a result, subliminal advertising has a gradual effect on customer behaviour.
4. If consumers are aware that a subliminal stimulus is included in an advertising, the stimulus tends to lose its meaning and impact. Therefore, "consciousness" is key in determining whether or not a subliminal message will affect a person's behaviour.

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