SUBLIMINAL MANIPULATION IN THE ADVERTISING PHOTOGRAPHY

Ertugrul Tunali

Course Coordinator: Alessandro Segalini

IZMIR UNIVERSITY OF ECONOMICS, FACULTY OF FINE ARTS AND DESIGN
DEPARTMENT OF VISUAL COMMUNICATION DESIGN

FALL 2013, GD494/MMD494

INTRODUCTION

Art has gone through many changes since it has first represented itself on the walls of the caves in the stone age. We clearly observe that “the questioning function of the art” has been set aside by the impressionist, accumulating human beings as the different methods of productions were implemented. Advertising has flourished through the time. Art showed itself in populist and sociological forms. In one side, artists struggled to break down the walls of taboos, social impositions and questioned the political systems, on the other side artists worked hard to analyze the human psychological system to boost the consumption by advertising.

What is subliminal? English language dictionaries define this word as “…existing or operating below the threshold of consciousness; being or employing stimuli insufficiently intense to produce a discrete sensation but often being or designed to be intense enough to influence the mental processes or the behavior of the individual: a subliminal stimulus; subliminal advertising”.

I have found that this manipulation method to the subconscious exists since the times of Aristotle and implemented in many fields. It actually startles me. Because, some scientific researches were dedicated solely to this purpose to affect even the most sophisticated brains. This is the startling point. Even though we are not consciously aware, we are directed by subliminal messages to buy more and more which are mostly presented to us by huge conglomerate companies. I shall provide information that I gathered on this subject and present some visual material.
# CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION

2. TABLE OF CONTENTS

3. ABSTRACT

## CHAPTERS

3. HISTORY OF SUBLIMINAL

4. HUMAN AND SUBLIMINAL MIND

   2.1 Why Subliminal Used

   2.2 Subliminal Attract

   2.3 Subliminal Attack

5. MARKETING STRATEGY IN SUBLIMINAL WAYS

   3.1 Designers

   3.2 Subliminal Message

   3.3 Tachistoscop

6. CONCLUSION

7. REFERENCES

8. APPENDIX

   12. fig. 18. 19. 20.

   13. fig. 21. 22. 23.

   14. fig. 24. 25. 26. 27.

   15. fig. 28. 29. 30. 31. 32. 33.

   16. fig. 34. 35. 36.
ABSTRACT

Advertisements bombard every minute of our lives. Anyone, however, can find subliminal advertising photographs in every major advertisement and magazine cover. The advertising industry applies deceptive subliminal advertising techniques which most us are unaware of. By using subliminal techniques, advertisers manipulate and control us in many ways. We may ignore ads as we see a billboard on the way to school or to work. But, most of us do not realize the mind games the advertisers has been playing on our subconscious minds. It is startling if realized the advertisers has gained control of our lives without us even knowing it.

CHAPTER–1
HISTORY OF SUBLIMINAL

I have heard of naked women in ice cubes floating on drinks. I have also heard of subliminal messages being flashed in theaters telling people to drink soda and eat popcorn.

Why do you have a favorite ad on TV(fig. 20.) or in a magazine? Why do you like it? Advertisers use subliminal techniques to put hidden messages into their ads. Everyone's subconscious mind has a full load of them, each expertly targeted by the advertisers. One can guess it is like being brainwashed every time you see an ad.
Plato, Aristotle, and early artists in the Renaissance, have used subliminal techniques in their artwork. Aristotle first documented the relationship between dreams and the unconscious mind. Subliminal perception is not a newly discovered used only by the advertising industry.

CHAPTER 2
HUMAN AND SUBLIMINAL MIND

Definition of subliminal perception is: “below threshold.” The minimum stimulation necessary to detect a particular stimulus (not necessarily recognize), is called the absolute threshold. It is generally accepted that a perception is subliminal if a great majority of the audience cannot perceive it consciously. Perception is the brain's reception of incoming stimuli. It is total and instantaneous. The rest is either stored in subconscious memory or dumped as irrelevant information. A good definition of subliminal perception or subliminal reception is.

1) The subject responds without awareness to stimulus.
2) Subject knows he is being stimulated, but doesn't know what it is.

The understanding of the brain is too limited to understand how or why this works. However, the advertisers don't care about the inner workings of the brain. They only care that the population can be influenced and they have the resources to do the influencing. Tachistoscope projectors, which can flash words or images onto the screen with a duration of several milliseconds, are used to display the stimuli. Although the subject reports to having no awareness of the stimuli, researchers detected this by using an electroencephalograph (EEG). It is clear that humans can be affected by subliminal stimuli without their conscious awareness.

Our brain has evolved from unconscious processing to conscious awareness, the brain has developed control mechanisms to filter most of the sensory input. To fully utilize the limited consciousness, and to protect the brain from sensory overload, only a fraction of the sensory input is channeled into the conscious mind. The rest is processed by our unconscious mind.

Before one can understand the subliminal techniques advertisers use to influence the audience, one must understand the vulnerabilities in humans. The human being is a complex creature. The same complexity that gives us the ability to manipulate objects also makes us vulnerable to manipulation. Once the advertisers find these vulnerabilities (and they have done extensive research), there is little the public can do to defend themselves.
2–1. WHY SUBLIMINAL USED

Advertisers target the consumers’ fears and desires. Advertisers present to the consumer on the conscious level a safe, neutral, naturally appealing ad to pacify the consumer’s resistance to subliminal advertising. While glancing through an ad, the average consumer block-reads paragraphs and barely notices an ad that they have seem many times.

As defined earlier, perception is the brain’s reception of incoming stimuli. Some of this perception is conscious, while most of it is unconscious.Advertisers had done extensive study on how our brains perceives input and has found that “most print advertising is designed for perceptual exposure time of less than one second.” In other words, they are designed for the subconscious mind to absorb completely instantaneously while the conscious mind barely catches the headline. Not everyone perceives an image the same.(fig.18.)

2–2. SUBLIMINAL ATTRACT

Advertisers take advantage of the fact that our society and its individual is sexually repressed in order to display sexually oriented subliminal messages. This also partially explains why male genitalia is directed toward males in advertisements, and female genitalia toward females. Men would be more reserved in observing male genitalia(fig. 22.) while they would readily consciously perceive embedded female breasts (fig. 23.). After the image is discovered on the Coca Cola(fig. 35.) glass, the viewer subsequently notices it every time he or she sees the can. By using cultural taboos, our defense mechanisms block sexually explicit images from our conscious mind but our unconscious mind still perceives the image. We associate the message with the product and when we see this product on the shelf at a later date, are subconscious mind would follow the purchasing command and consequently influencing our conscious mind to buy the product. In the case of repression,
the subliminal command hides away in unconscious memory until an event, like the sight of the product on the shelf, triggers it.

Since we can perceive subliminal information, we must also have the ability to subconsciously store this information in memory. Like conscious perception to subconscious perception, conscious memory is very limited, while subconscious memory has an enormous capacity but lacks the ability to intellectually synthesize and interpret information. The more emotionalized the data, for example sex and death, the more likely it is to be retained in subconscious memory. The sexually loaded subliminal message works its way into the buyers’ subconscious memory and days later when the buyer goes into a store, the retrieval cues activate the command to influence the buyer. This is why the most influential ads are the ones you don’t remember consciously. Knowing this, advertisers will employ every technique in the book to tempt your drives and desires while provoking your fears.

2.3. SUBNIMINAL ATTACK

Sexual motivation is nature’s clever way of making people procreate, thus enabling our species’ survival. The pleasure of sex is our genes’ way of preserving and spreading themselves. There are experiments supporting the greater influence of subliminal stimuli on drives. To prime our sexual drives, advertisers will frequently embed the word “SEX” into their ads. Sex is the common denominator for all advertisements. We are in a sexually repressed society. Sex appeals to both the conscious and subconscious mind by attracting attention and influencing their behavior through drive control. Advertisers not only projects how their product enhances the sexual experience, but simply gives permission to the public for sexual promiscuity. Some of the most pervasive, sexual imagery in advertising is more symbolic than blatant, although the connotations are far from subtle. The imagery sends a message to the unconscious, granting permission to fulfill sexual wishes and points the way to an attractor that can facilitate the encounter.

fig. 8. 9. Alchol and cigar brands secretly attacks your subconscious mind. Even we know, it is unhealty but we still want those products for using our pleasure.
CHAPTER 3
MARKETING STRATEGY IN SUBLIMINAL WAYS

Armed with limitless resources, advertisers spend millions of dollars on researching exactly how to make you buy their product. Knowing that you have crave sex and fear death. The consumer really doesn't know what they want to buy in the mass market. Since mass production has taken over, the difference in quality and effectiveness between one product and another of a similar price is nonexistent. Some advertisers still boast the quality of their products, but most have turned to more effective means of advertising—subliminal advertising. In order to do this, they must do some background research. After they find your vulnerabilities, they target specific areas and fire their shots of subliminal messages.

3.1. Designers

Graphic design artists have a wealth of tools at their hands to expertly embed subliminal messages into their pictures. At the dawn of subliminal advertising, graphic artists painted on photographs. That was very difficult to do without ruining the picture. Later, with bigger budgets and better equipment, graphic artists used airbrushes to craft their design onto billboards and then take a picture of it. Now, everything is done digitally on the computer with perfection. There are six general subliminal strategies: figure-ground reversals, embedding, double entendre, low-intensity light and low-volume sound, tachistoscopic displays, lighting and background sound. Graphic artists can take advantage of multiple techniques to produce the desired effects.

Embedding is the processing of hiding one image in the form of another. This is a difficult process but if successful, very influential. Emotionalized, repressed information remains in the memory system for long periods, perhaps for a lifetime.” Genitalia is one of the most often used images for embedding. The female torso in the Diet Coca Cola bottle described earlier is an example of embedding. For alcohol or soft drink ads, advertisers like to depict their drink in either the bottle or a glass, half filled ice cubes and half with the drink, with condensation drops oozing down the sides of the glass.

Graphic artists has gotten a lot of expertise at embedding objects in these pictures. The advertisers’ favorite image to put in here are skulls and screaming contorted faces. Many images, phrases, and slogans have hidden double meanings behind them. This is called double entendre. Symbolism can also go into this category. Often, their hidden meanings have sexual connotations. Double meanings appear to enrich significance in virtually any symbolic stimuli. Unconsciously perceived information of this taboo nature ensures a deep, meaningful emotional response, and continued memory.
3.2. Subliminal Message

One example of advertiser’s exploitation of double entendre is Turkish Atlas Jet’s ads. As translated freely from those photos, they say: ‘You will love 69,’ ‘Ours is 77 cm long,’ ‘We love your legs.’ In response to these ads the CEO of Pegasus Airlines Ali Sabancı said that ‘ours is not 77 cm long but it takes off (erects) on time.’(fig. 34.)

Advertisers often use lemon and oranges to portray fertility and women. Ties are a common phallic symbol. Through these symbolic images, can present a seemingly harmless ad while entrenching your subconscious mind with deeper meanings.

Symbolic communications bypass the layers of logic and cultural appropriateness and head straight for the unconscious, which is then free to find an equivalence between what is symbolized, in this case sexual arousal.

By far the most commonly embedded image is the word SEX. Advertisers have indiscriminately sexualized virtually everything they publish or broadcast with subliminal SEXes.” Often, graphic artists mosaic SEXes onto textured surfaces or in edges, shadows, and highlights. Just pick up any major magazine, relax, and stare into it for a couple of minutes. You will soon find these SEXes popping out at you. Other commonly used words are FUCK, DIE, and KILL.(fig. 28–33.), among other emotionally loaded four letter words. Such subliminal instructions are dangerous indeed. In Turkey, lately a caricaturist has been sued to have a hidden message in one of his caricatures stating that ‘There is no Allah and religion is a lie.’
The final two techniques, tachistoscopic display and lighting and background sound, are used in film and video advertisers. As mentioned earlier, tachistoscopic displays flash images onto the screen in fractions of a second not perceivable by the conscious mind. Another method tachistoscopic displays can use is superimposing the image onto existing image just below the conscious perception level. Lighting and background sound adjust the mood of the scenery. In most cases, it reinforces the conscious perception.
CHAPTER 4
CONCLUSION

Using these research and subliminal techniques, advertisers have great control on the consumer. With motivational research, they have found eight hidden needs in the human psyche: emotional security, reassurance of worth, ego-gratification, creative outlets, love objects, sense of power, sense of roots, and immortality. Also, advertisers found ten areas of behavior they can subliminal influence: conscious perception, emotional response, drive-related behaviors, adaptation levels, verbal formulations, memory, perceptual defenses, dreams, psychopathology, and purchasing and consumption behavior. Anyone has the potential to influence all ten behaviors, but advertisers of course are concerned with purchasing and consumption behaviors. Advertisers can use this knowledge to break down any consumer barriers. Subliminals are inherently deceptive because the consumer does not perceive them at a normal level of awareness, and thus is given no choice whether to accept or reject the message, as is the case with normal advertising.

Half of advertisers’ dominating influence can be attributed to their use of subliminal advertising. They take advantage of the vulnerabilities in our subconscious minds. Using the latest computer technology, they have unparalleled resources to manipulate each image to target a specific weakness in us. What can we do to protect ourselves? Knowledge. Knowledge that advertisers are trying to influence and control us and that we can fight back. The next time we make a purchasing decision, let us ask ourselves, “Why am I choosing this product?” Buy a product because of its taste, its quality, and its price. Never buy a product because its packaging looks good or because it is a name brand. It is the major companies that have the resources to do subliminal advertising.
REFERENCES

ALİŞİR, Ali, Neoliberal Sanat, Photoline Dergisi, year:11, issue June-July 2013, p.58.

AYTEMUR, Sait (2004), Reklamın İyisi Kötüsü Olmaz, MediaCat Kitapları, İstanbul.

DİRİCAN, Murat, Bir Gösterge Dizgesi Olarak Fotoğraf, Tübitak, Bilem ve Teknik Dergisi, issue 345 / August 1996, p.92.

KÜÇÜKERDOĞAN, G. Rengin (2005), Reklam Söylemi?, Es Yayınları, İstanbul.


SEFER, Darıcı (2012), Subliminal İşgal, Destek Yayınları (6. printing / 2013), İstanbul.


WEB REFERENCES

http://kalemicumbus.blogspot.com/2012/12/bilinc-uyurbilincalt-uyumaz.html


http://www.gencgrafiker.com/reklam-tasarimlarda-manipulasyon-kullanimi/

http://www.medyaloji.net/resim/reklam_tasarimcilarin_muhutesem_manipulasyonlari00.htm

APPENDIX

fig. 18. “Two man look out through the same bars: One sees the mud and one the starts.”

F.Langbridge.

fig. 19. Brand makes you need and buy their products.

fig. 20. A Walt Disney’s flowers from a cartoon. Tv is the best weapon for subliminal.
fig. 21. Maybe you do not like beer but this still makes you attracted. Brands uses this kind of subliminals to take your attention on their brands.

fig. 22. They are not just simple bottles anymore.

fig. 23. Subliminal manipulation example. This may explains why girls love ice-cream more in hard relationships.
fig. 24. Skull simply triggers your attention.

fig. 25. Dalí’s picture.

fig. 26. Government uses to manipulation.

fig. 27. Can you trust the media if you don’t know it is manipulated?
fig. 28–33. Fuck and Sex around us always. Dirty ways to use subliminal.
fig. 34. Subnimal not always a bad thing, if it is in right hands it is a great weapon.

fig. 35. Is that be possible, yes it is! Even designers says yes, and effects of subliminal is good for sales.

fig. 36. Now we can observe more clear.