Subliminal Messages

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James Vicary claimed to have introduced subliminal messages with big advertisement effects in 1957 when he conducted an experiment with very quickly flashing messages in the movies of a cinema in New Jersey.

The messages projected phrases like "Drink Coca Cola" or "Hungry? Eat popcorn". It was displayed so fast that people never consciously could notice them.

Vicary claimed that the messages increased the sales of popcorn and Coke.

This started mass hysteria. People were afraid that subliminal messaging was already taking place in films and was being used to advertise or for propaganda without people knowing it.

People thought if it worked that well, then they're certainly using it for political persuasion. This gave root to conspiracy theories the government or by communism was using subliminal seduction to persuade people or mind control.

Many countries banned this type of advertisement.

The only problem was: The experiment NEVER TOOK PLACE; Vicary lied for fame and fabricated the results. It was a simple scientific fraud.

What are Subliminal Messages?

These are forms of messages which escape our conscious perception, but reach through to the brain unconsciously. The most normal presentations of subliminal messages are visually or by audio.

In a visual presentation such as a normal movie, words, phrases, or images are shown quickly in between the frames of the movie - faster than we can notice consciously. The words, phrases, or images also can be displayed somewhere on the screen where we would not normally direct our attention.

So we just watch the movie and think that did not see any hidden messages.

Vicary claimed that your brain will notice the message, but not your consciousness. So it would be much harder to determine that this is an advertisement trying to persuade me. It is well known that advertisement work better if the person does not perceive it as advertisement.

With subliminal messages [1], it was supposedly even worse: people would think that the advertisement was actually something THEY thought of and wanted, not an advertisement, and thus making it far more likely that people buy the item.

Later research showed that subliminal advertisement (priming [2]) can have some small and short-lasting effects. There is no evidence that it can persuade people to behave or think very differently from what they would in the long run.

Lying About Experiments

From time to time there have been scientists or con-scientists claiming to have done experiments they never have done.

It is a big problem for the science and for the scientists involved.

Science loses credibility and many hours of scientific work are lost. The scientists will almost certainly never be taken seriously again by the community or the society.

If you make an important discovery or break-through, you can be sure of one thing: Others will always try to replicate your experiment. This means that they will check if they get the same finding using the same methods. If it is not possible to check it or if the results are different, scientist often don't recognize the discovery as important until there is further evidence.

Other Claimed Stunts With Subliminal Messages

Several Walt Disney cartoons were accused of containing hidden sexual meanings, such as in The Little Mermaid or Lion King. In Lion King, there are some clouds which form the word "SEX" when Mufasa dies.

In music, many bands have been accused of putting subliminal messages in their songs. Judas Preist was accused of deliberately try to make youth commit suicide. Beatles was thought to put "backmasking", messages phonetically reversed, on their Revolver-CD.

Often people reading in their own interpretations in movies, music etc, and believe they are being misled.

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Links
[1] http://www.snopes.com/business/hidden/popcorn.asp
[2] https://www.explorable.com/priming