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National College of Art & Design
Faculty of Design, Department of Visual Communication

Subconscious Manipulation in Advertising

by Brian Wasson

Submitted to the Faculty of History of Art and Design and
Complementary Studies in candidacy for the degree of
B. Des in Visual Communications.
1999

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Faculty of Design Department of Visual Communication

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Introduction

Subliminal projection burst onto the advertising scene in 1957 and stirred up the most controversy that the advertising industry has ever faced, controversy that is still cooling off. The mention of Subliminals to some people still provokes wild rantings about mind control and “big brother”, for something that attracted to much attention and made such a lasting impact, subliminal projection actually existed for a remarkably short time. After it’s emergence in early 1957 it was effectively outlawed by early 1958. As an advertising technique it never gained widespread application. It is the after effects of this explosion that are most interesting from the giant leaps in advertising techniques in the forties and fifties through the steady progression and evolution to the present day.

As subliminal projection came to a sudden end before it had really gotten started, it is the techniques that evolved from it that are of most interest. Subliminal projection was part of a growing interest in the subconscious among advertisers and it’s extraordinary claims sparked off a wave of fresh ideas that quickly saturated the advertising industry.

It seems that subliminal or subconscious manipulation is in use in almost every advertisement or commercial you will see. The degree to which this is used, where and how is what I intend to discuss in this thesis. Of course you cannot analyse a technique without studying it’s effect and so this is another subject I will cover. Discussing what impact these various techniques have on us, the consumer, are we puppets of the advertiser? Or, do we frustrate their every move?

I hope to give as well balanced and unbiased a discussion as possible. It is only too easy to be influenced by the connotations of terms like subliminal messages and subconscious manipulation. I do not want to produce a series of paranoid ramblings. So I intend to use scientific analysis of this new scientific trend in advertising. There are many factors to be discussed, from the anxieties that advertisements rely upon, to the pros and cons of the various techniques. I will do this by discussing a series of points. First the anxieties that form the core of modern advertising and the primary target for all attempts at manipulation. I will also look at the techniques commonly used to achieve these ends. Then I

will study the history of subliminal projection, the purest attempt at subconscious manipulation, invented in the 1950's and the cause of years of international paranoia. An important factor in a visual subject like this one is the nature of perception. So I will also discuss the psychology of seeing in relation to techniques of advertising. Conditioning is another point that is fundamental to our reaction to advertising and all visual stimulus. Finally in the second chapter I hope to conduct a further analysis of these points and their relation to one another, I will also look at the progress in advertising techniques since the emergence of subliminal projection in the 1950's. Finally I will evaluate these processes in relation their cultural moral and practical implications and round up with a look at what the future may hold for us in the advertising field. This I hope will provide a thorough account of the covert aspect of advertising and its application.

will study the history of subliminal projection, the experimental
methodology involved in the 1950's and the case of young
people. An important feature is that this area is the
concern of the psychology of seeing and hearing.
The second of the two conditioning is another part of the
conditioning is concerned with the visual stimulus. It is the
idea of seeing a series of these points and to be able to
and we will look at the various theoretical approaches to the
theories of subliminal projection in the 1950's. And we will
show in section the experimental method and the results of the
theories of what is the role of the subliminal projection
theories of the subliminal projection of the subliminal projection

Chapter 1

ANXIETIES

Anxieties are the foundation stones of modern advertising, the building blocks with which millions of pounds worth of products are sold. Anxieties are the weaknesses that allow others to influence our actions, the reasons behind many of our motivations, and the advertisers dream.

Once upon a time advertising was concerned only with representing facts, letting the customer know that a certain service was available, where and how much. However, the general public had little money to spend on non-essential items and the companies had little competition in the particular field. In modern society however, most of the money we spend is on luxury items and the competition is immense. It almost seems that there is a brand for every type of persons or perhaps every fear.

Our fears have become the answers to all the ad-men's problems, it is easier to sell happiness rather than jeans. So the ad-man's job has changed from presenting information about the product, to presenting a solution to our fears. Social embarrassment is a primary target especially in relation to clothing or hygiene products. Think of how many jeans advertisements you have seen that told about the quality and durability of the product. The majority of these advertisements sell popularity and sex, playing with fears of inadequacy, which considering the adolescent market which provides much of the sales is a very effective policy. The process of using anxieties is a simple one, the advertisers simply generate anxiety or fear and present the product as an antidote, so that our fears can be resolved as easily as buying the product.

Cigarette advertising is a prime example of the modern psychological approach to advertising. It has been forced into abstraction by many regulations attempting to restrict its effect, but still manages to sell glamour and rebellion to thousands of young people every year. Cigarette companies are banned from directly selling their product, or even picturing it in use, therefore any direct or simplistic approach to advertising is impossible. Yet their abstract approach

ANNEXES

At the end of the first chapter, the author states that the purpose of the book is to provide a comprehensive overview of the field of psychology. The book is divided into two main parts: the first part covers the history and foundations of psychology, and the second part covers the various subfields of psychology.

The first part of the book, which covers the history and foundations of psychology, is divided into three chapters. Chapter 1, "The History of Psychology," provides a detailed overview of the development of psychology as a scientific discipline. Chapter 2, "The Foundations of Psychology," discusses the various schools of thought that have shaped the field of psychology. Chapter 3, "The Role of Psychology in Society," explores the ways in which psychology is applied in various fields, such as education, medicine, and law.

The second part of the book, which covers the various subfields of psychology, is divided into ten chapters. Chapter 4, "Biological Psychology," discusses the relationship between biology and psychology. Chapter 5, "Developmental Psychology," explores the ways in which people change and grow over time. Chapter 6, "Social Psychology," discusses the ways in which people are influenced by others. Chapter 7, "Personality Psychology," explores the ways in which people differ from one another. Chapter 8, "Abnormal Psychology," discusses the various types of mental disorders. Chapter 9, "Health Psychology," explores the ways in which psychology is applied in the field of medicine. Chapter 10, "Environmental Psychology," discusses the ways in which the environment influences human behavior.

The book is written in a clear and concise style, and it includes a wealth of examples and illustrations to help readers understand the concepts being discussed. The book is suitable for use as a textbook in a psychology course, or as a reference work for anyone interested in the field of psychology.

seems to be amazingly effective perhaps because of the surreal nature. If you consider that surrealism as an art movement was primarily concerned with the subconscious and dreams, it seems only natural that surreal advertisements gain a direct line to the observers unconscious desires and fears.

It was not long after psychoanalysis and the work of Sigmund Freud came to the attention of artists, in the form of the 'surrealist' movement, that it came to the attention of advertisers. In the 1940's came 'motivational research' the true science of advertising, and the assault of consumer anxieties began. This is the point at which advertising pulls itself out of the dark ages and begins to develop a host of new possibilities. Motivational Research itself is more or less a new development in market research, it seeks to isolate the motives behind why we buy certain products concentrating research on the subconscious. The technique works by a depth interview, a tactic borrowed from conventional psychoanalysis. The idea behind this tactic is that the subject reveals aspects of his personality and deep motivations through indirect questioning. These conclusions are reached only through psychological analysis of these seemingly innocent answers. The technique as a whole caused a wave of controversy, as most new techniques seem to, when it appeared, though this controversy was restricted the advertising industry. Vance Packard in his book "The Hidden Persuaders" gives a detailed account of Motivational Researches rise to acceptability. Although the technique did not receive much attention until the 1940's it seems that some agencies were experimenting with it as early as 1935. It then spent almost a decade fighting for acceptance against widespread opposition, this opposition came from the advertising executives who found it hard to accept this totally new approach to advertising. Up until this time advertising had worked on a simple system of logic and common-sense but now agencies were being confronted with miraculous claims about a process that was beyond their comprehension and beyond their field of expertise. Debate has continued for some time on how effective psychoanalytical techniques can be when applied to the masses and mass media, but despite this Motivational Research has become part of everyday life in advertising. This technique however is not the holy grail that some hailed it to be at first, although it goes a long way towards isolating the anxieties that can be preyed upon in each specific circumstance, the execution of the actual advertisements is still quite often determined by old fashioned intuition.



TECHNIQUES

Contemporary advertising is compiled from a complex language of symbols, tricks and techniques. To describe them all would be a thesis in itself. This is a quick summary of the more common techniques:

Colour is a device common to all advertisements even if it's only significance is the lack of colour. Colour is something we see constantly and therefore never consciously analyse. All colours have some psychological significance and advertisements can play on this. Colours can also be used to form a subtle link between two objects by colouring them similarly. These factors make colour a very potent tool for subconscious advertisers. An example of colour being used to great effect can be seen in many years of Benson & Hedges advertising. these ads. forced into abstraction as mentioned earlier, concentrate almost exclusively on their golden colouring. This has been so successful that if you were confronted with a golden rectangle it is probable that one of the first things you would think of would be Benson & Hedges cigarettes, and if this were in an advertising context then it would be almost certain. This is clearly illustrated in the advertisement below. We are presented with a smooth shining gold box and only an obscured reference to the logotype, yet it is perfectly clear what the product is.

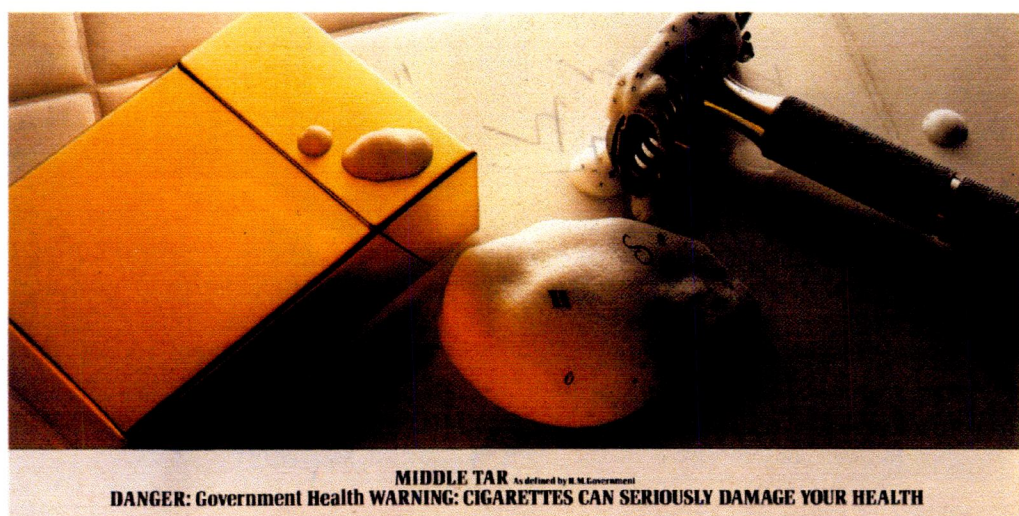


Figure 1: Benson & Hedges

The second factor common to most advertising is image. Every product promotes an image brand identity and therefore loyalty depends upon it. With

REPORT OF THE COMMISSIONER OF THE GENERAL LAND OFFICE
FOR THE YEAR 1891

The following table shows the number of acres of land
owned by the Government in the several States and
Territories, and the number of acres of land
owned by the private citizens of the same States
and Territories, for the year 1891. The total
number of acres of land owned by the Government
is 1,000,000,000, and the total number of acres
owned by the private citizens is 1,000,000,000.



THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
WASHINGTON, D. C.

the current overcrowded market and all round standardisation image is often the only perceivable difference between products. Product image is therefore the main selling point of the majority of products on the market and vital to any products success. Luxury products and those with little perceivable effect are most reliant on image, this is a common problem in marketing toiletries. Having once worked on a project set by Lynx I received first hand insights into the importance of their image to them. They had even gone to the length of detailing the car that their ideal customer would drive. they also had a list of key words to be kept in mind when dealing with their image, and of course most important to their marketing was the 'Lynx effect' claiming in a semi humorous way to make any man irresistible to all women. With their black and white sleekly shaped products an image to be reckoned with.

A common technique that advertisers use is attributing value to the product by linking it to something the consumer already values. In this way the product can be represented as a kind of currency with which you can buy what you want. By this process the advertisement can almost make the unattainable seem attainable. Here again we can use the Lynx example. They are marketing the 'Lynx effect', when you buy Lynx products it is the irresistibility that you are really buying.

The next tool is a combination of the above two, using the product to buy the image. In this way people will buy the product to gain the image or join the associated group, a method particularly successful on teenagers who suffer constant anxiety about status within the peer group. If this method is particularly successful people will not just buy in order to become part of this group but may feel that they already belong to this group and therefore must buy. This technique applies mostly to status symbol products like Calvin Klein jeans or a Mercedes car. The fact is that a Volkswagen Beetle is extremely practical for getting from A to B but not many business men drive one. Cars like the Mercedes are symbols of power and success, those who crave success want a Mercedes. and those who are successful feel they ought to have one. Achieving this sort symbolic status takes a lot of careful advertising but this is how most cars are sold. Below is an example of this sort of advertising. the pure unadorned way in which the product is presented reflects the symbolic power it has. There is no need for extra symbolism or prompts as no symbol could be more effective than a Mercedes-Benz. The type in this advertisement supports the image wonderfully with its references to C.E.O.'s. The advertisement as a whole is essentially an exercise in sustaining an image, the confident way the



product is used shows that the desired image is already well in place, this is just maintenance.

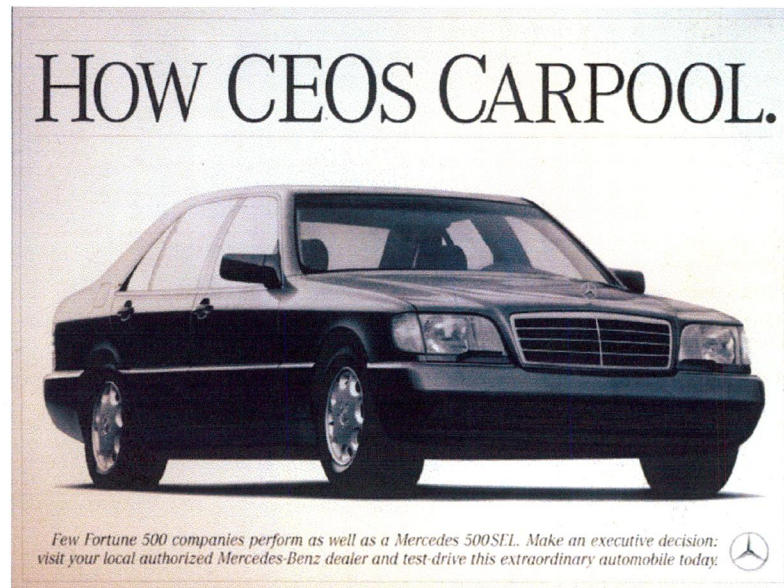


Figure 2: Mercedes

All signs and symbols require some degree of participation in deciphering them. Some advertisements play on this by including jokes and puzzles. By this technique these advertisements invite us to participate and become much more accessible, these can even entertain us as they slip their message along, and are often the most memorable advertisements. We can see this in action in the VolksWagon ad. below. The advertisement contains a joking reference to the near boredom of VolksWagon's reliability, which is their main sales pitch. As with all humorous advertisements it is the audience participation that is crucial. This advertisement assumes we know the VolksWagon's reputation and invites us to use our knowledge so that we can get the joke, and in this way the advertisement grants us a feeling of achievement. Plus by making us complete the message rather than simply stating it, it receives a more favourable reaction.



Figure 3: VolksWagon

The representation of nature in advertisements can be used to give a homely, fresh from the farm feel or analysed through science it is very useful in giving a product credibility and presenting what is being said as fact. One example of the nature image is given below. The advertisement simply contains a number of hints to promote the pure fruit content of the product. The strawberry simply becomes the jar, in the advertisement and in our minds.



Figure 4: Kraft

Surrealism as mentioned earlier has much common ground with advertising and is therefore a powerful technique. Because there is little point in trying to understand a surreal image it can slip straight to the subconscious and leave it's message. Cigarette advertisements commonly use this tool because of the restrictions placed on them, think of the multitude of images you have been seeing using a sharp object and purple silk and what comes to mind when you do see it. Below we are presented with a simple image of cut silk. An immensely stylish visual pun with the folded purple silk adding a touch of elegance.

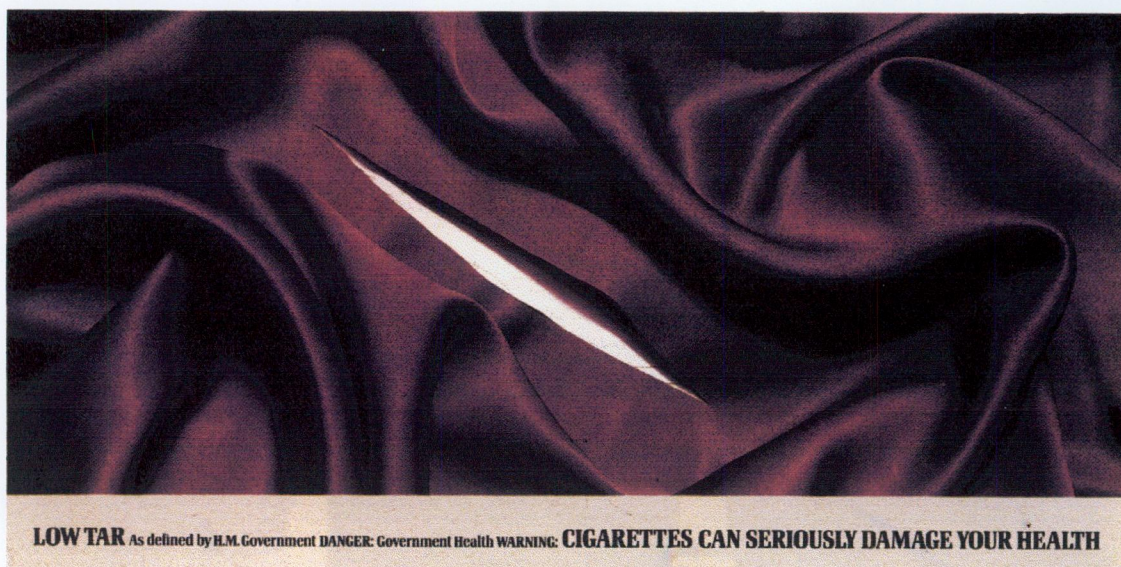


Figure 5: Silk Cut

The representation of nature in advertisements can be used to give a sense of freshness and health to the product. This is often achieved through the use of natural elements and a focus on the product's natural ingredients. The advertisement should contain a number of elements that are related to the product, the quality of the product, and the benefits of the product.



The advertisement should also contain a number of elements that are related to the product, the quality of the product, and the benefits of the product. The advertisement should contain a number of elements that are related to the product, the quality of the product, and the benefits of the product. The advertisement should contain a number of elements that are related to the product, the quality of the product, and the benefits of the product.



Figure 2. A glass jar containing a fruit.

Time is also prone to manipulation in advertising, from misty memories to future ambitions. Linking the product with a joyful memory or selling is our hopes for the future. The DeLonghi advertisement below shows history being put to good use. The renaissance was probably the greatest time in Italian history, so references to it give a favourable image when an Italian company attempts to sell its product outside its own country. They are trying here to equate the product with other great Italian achievements that the consumer knows of.



Figure 6: DeLonghi

All these techniques are quite covert in their nature and are not noticed until looked for this is why they are effective. No one would believe you if you said 'buy this product, it's great,' but if you represent the product as a way for the consumer to get something great, no one will think long enough to disbelieve. So if to disbelieve a message we must see it and then stop and analyse it, then a message that is itself imperceivable would bypass all possibility of disbelief. This is the realm of subliminal projection, the most infamous of advertising techniques. However this infamy also led to its demise, being outlawed in the late 1950's

THE SUBLIMINAL STATUS -QUO

If subliminal projection was outlawed back in the 50's then we must now be safe from advertisers playing with our subconscious minds. There are many reasons why this is not quite true, but first we should look at the outlawing of subliminal



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projection. Subliminal messages must have been a serious threat if the US Government took such steps to outlaw it, but James Vicary the inventor of this method claims that it is only effective if the thought already exists in the consumer, these advertisements merely remind them of the idea. Another factor is that no one else has ever matched the success rate that Vicary reported in his New Jersey tests. The Federal Communications Commission in its many reports on this subject detail many companies that they questioned about the method. A few broadcasting companies admitted to experimenting with subliminal projection but after getting no significant response dumped the idea, when the government outlawed the process it faced no serious opposition even from the advertisement agencies who felt that the stigma the process generated out weighed any benefits it could yield.

So if the subliminals were being discarded by so many of the companies, why was there any need to make it illegal. In the 1977 Federal Communications Commission Report they seem concerned with 'the ethics of televising concealed information because of the possible effects on audiences. This and other Federal Communications Commission documents after analysing the reported effects, or lack of, by subliminal projection, recommend its outlaw mostly on ethical reasons. The government objection to subliminal projection seems to be on the basis that 'listeners and viewers are entitled to know who is trying to persuade them.'

So the government ban subliminal advertising on the basis that people are not aware that attempts are being made to persuade them, not on any psychological basis. There is no evidence to prove that subliminal advertising is more effective than supraliminal advertising. As the Federal Communications Commission discovered when they conducted research into the subject and surveyed companies that had experimented with the technique.

Judging by some of the psychological techniques developed for use in conventional supraliminal advertising, flashing the message 'buy this' seems very crude and unrealistic.

So it seems that the subliminal still plays a large part in advertising, even if not in its purest form. When you read about the lengths advertising agencies go to persuade us to spend, subliminal projection seems a childish mockery of the real situation.

PERCEPTION

Before we can give a valuable estimate of the effects of subliminals. We should analyse how we see. A point that must be made before we continue is the recognition and definition of embeds. I have encountered two techniques of advertising referred to as embeds, first the embedding of images or symbols within advertisements, and secondly the placing of products in films. To avoid confusion I will refer to the latter as product placement from now on. To continue on the note of perception if we understand how sight functions it becomes possible to understand how subliminals and embeds function. Rather than presenting a complete study of visual perception it is more practical look back at what we know about how subliminals are used and apply the psychology and physiology of seeing to that.

So what aspects of perception do the different types of subconscious advertising rely on? Subliminal projection with its quickly flashed messages relies on our seeing the message and reacting to it, in an instinctive rather than rational way. Embeds rely on the recognition of suggested objects or scenes within the greater advertisement, and again the irrational reaction to this. The carefully considered and laid out conventional advertisement as mentioned earlier is again much more complex. It relies to a great deal on symbols or objects of symbolic importance, our visual heritage becomes very important in these advertisements. The psychological significance of various objects, symbols and colours are central to these advertisements and the key to the significance of these is contained in both our visual inheritance and learning. Yet again these advertisements rely on an emotional and irrational response.

So now that we have isolated the perceptual processes that each method relies on we can apply visual psychology and physiology to that. As far as subliminal perception is concerned there is a fundamental problem. When James Vicary first tried the technique he flashed images at 1/3000th of a second (A.M. Seward Barry, 1997, page 261) and in Federal Communications Commission document there are reports of experiments at different speeds, but the problem is, as stated by Dr Kamp in the Federal Communications Commission 1984 statement of subliminals "... individuals have highly varying levels of perception making generalised threshold levels of subliminal perception very complicated".

This problem is further illustrated by a report, on an early experiment conducted by the BBC in 1956, contained in the 1997 Federal Communications Commission Information Bulletin in Subliminals. The report details that the BBC transmitted a message during a regular broadcast and at the end of the programme asked viewer to report if they had noticed anything unusual. There was an extremely small response and even fewer correctly identified the message. From this it was suggested that some viewers had thresholds low enough that the message appeared as a supraliminal message. So before we even question the ability to react to the stimulus, which is common to all techniques, we already have a major problem with subliminal projection, in that there is still very little proof of the messages being noticeable to the subconscious.

Embeds have a much greater likelihood of working, as shape recognition is one of the most important factors in perception and indeed many animals rely on this alone to form their visual world. It is a fact that most of our vision is made up of recognised shapes that the brain fills in, this is why we are not normally aware of our blind spot and why we can see faces in clouds. So if shape recognition is so instinctive all that remains is for proper reactions to be initiated. An example of this sort of embed is shown below. Finding examples of embeds is not easy as by their definition they are not meant to be consciously noticeable. In this example the child's face, as well as being a prominent piece of the overt message, acts as an embedded psychological trigger. The human face is one of the most universally recognisable images and facial expressions are a potent method of communication. In this advertisement all these factors and the protective instinct we all carry for children are used to trigger a response.

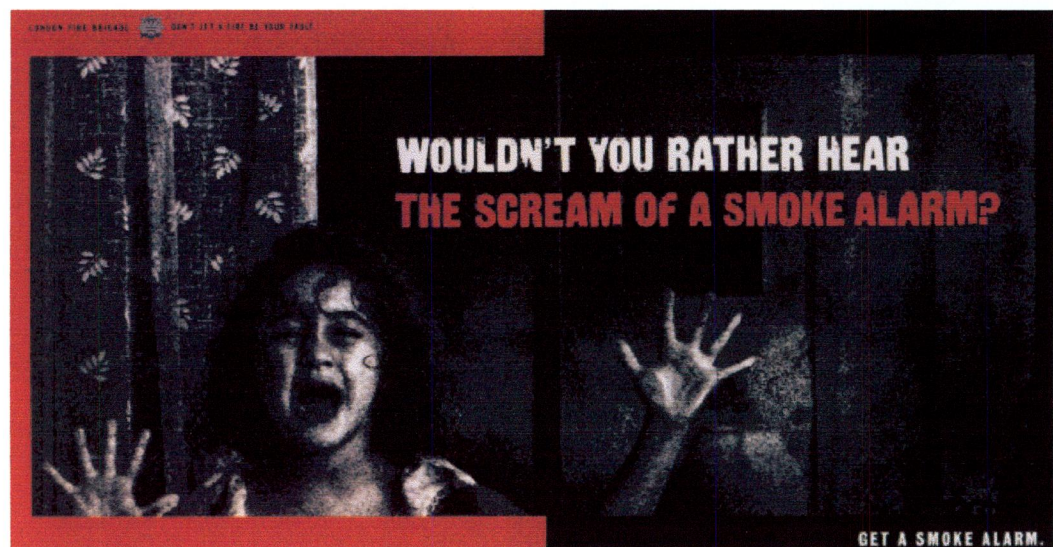


Figure 7: fire Safety

Product placement which has quite similar properties to embeds can also be discussed here. This technique has proved extremely effective, for example after Elliot shared some chocolate with the alien in E.T. sales of Reeces Pieces went up 70%. This shows the power of association, and to some extent the visual language is a learned one, developed through a lifetime of learning associations so there is undoubtedly a good probability that these associations can be harnessed.

It is this language of symbols that the third subtler type of advertisement utilises. Most of our perception of the world around us is developed through experience and these experiences, or at least the more general ones, can be used to evoke certain associations which shall in addition be attributed to the product contained in the advertisement. This kind of careful composition can be used to generate anxieties very effectively. In the example below we can see how many small considerations can be used to create a very powerful advertisement. The way the block of large type dwarves the figure making it look weak and insignificant. The block of vibrant red in relation to the stark white with the small black and white figure in the centre and the body language of the model in the photograph. All these elements come together in a powerful image.

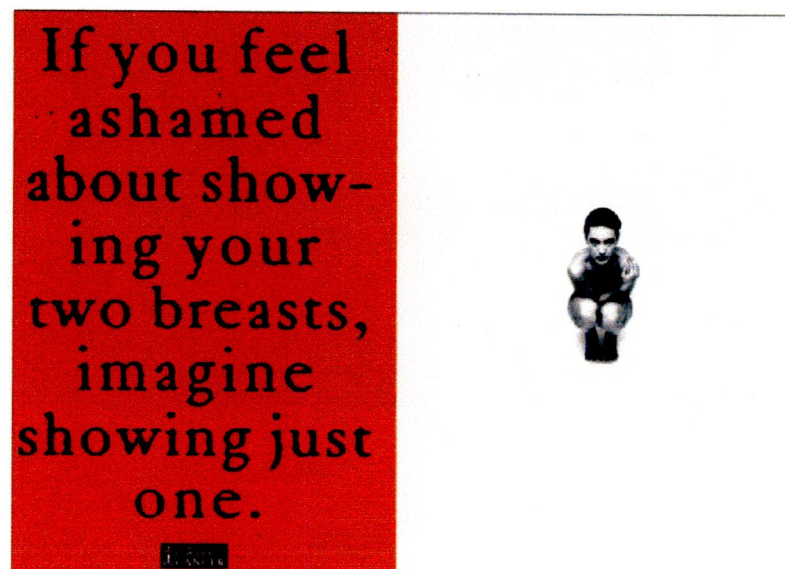


Figure 8: Breast Cancer Awareness

The final factor to be considered is reaction. Advertisements can use many techniques to slip messages to us subconsciously or evoke certain associations but if they do not generate the desired reaction these techniques are useless. This is where we must study the relationship between logic and visual interpretation, and here it seems the advertisements may score another point.

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if you feel
about how
the world
two oceans
imagine
showing you
one
and

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...the ... of the ... in the ... of the ...

As R.L. Gregory explains it, "The visual brain has it's own logic and preferences, which are not yet understood by us cortically. Some objects look beautiful, others ugly; but we have no idea, for all the theories that have been put forward, why this should be so. The answer lies a long way back in the history of the visual part of the brain and is lost to the new mechanisms which give our intellectual view of the world."(R.L. Gregory,1977, page 224)

Thus it seems that because we learned to see before we learned to reason, we cannot reason what we see. In Anne Marie Seward Barry's book *Visual Intelligence* she details the work of neurobiologist Joseph LeDoux whose work in mapping brain systems is particularly important here. He and his contemporaries came to the conclusion that 'sensory signals from the eye travel first to the thalamus and then, in a kind of short circuit, to the amygdala before a second signal is sent to the neocortex. The implication of this is that we begin to respond emotionally to situations before we can think them through.' (A.M. Seward Barry, 1997, page 18) This suggests that our reactions to visual stimulus is in many cases not a logical or controllable one, and when we apply this to advertising we can come to the conclusion that if the right buttons are pressed we have little control over our reactions, the ability to not act on impulse is our only defence.

CONDITIONING

An advertisement viewed out of context has very little effect especially when consciously analysed. The power of advertising lies in the constant barrage that we are subjected to every waking minute. As Marshall McLuhan explains it; "advertisements seem to work on the very advanced principle that a small pellet or pattern in a noisy, redundant barrage of repetition will gradually assert itself." (M. McLuhan, 1964, page 227) This is actually a tried and tested method of advertising. Thomas Barratt of Pear's soap realised the potential of the barrage technique in the late 19th century. Barratt sought to create a link between the name "Pears" and soap in the public's mind by flooding them with advertisements.

However, things have changed since the Pear's soap campaigns because now with everybody using the barrage technique of advertising it becomes a wall of noise and it gets increasing harder to penetrate the public's consciousness.

The effects of this are illustrated in Vance Packard's book "The Hidden Persuaders", where he relates a test made by James Vicary using blink rate to record levels of excitement, he then filmed a number of women as they moved through a supermarket an area of high advertisement saturation. The result was that their blink rate lowered instead of going up, it seems they fell into some sort of trance, overwhelmed by the advertising barrage they became numbed by it.

Although advertising noise may numb us to its effects, conditioning is indisputably a potent weapon. The visual language like any other language must be learned and conditioning can be used to manipulate this process. Although a certain degree of visual understanding is innate most object recognition must be learned. This is discussed thoroughly in "Eye and Brain" by R.L. Gregory. He discusses, for example, the blind man who regains his sight, even though he knows what a box is, and can now see it, he will not confirm that it is a box until he closes his eyes and feels it. This proves that if we have not learned that a box looks like a box, we must rely what senses we are used to with which to identify it. Essentially this process is equating the visual image of a box with all the properties we know a box has, therefore it is theoretically possible through visual learning to cause someone to attribute a visual image with chosen attributes. Think of this in an advertising context, and the ability to give your product magical powers is possible, and in fact common, how many times have you seen advertisements for anti-ageing creams as the fountain of youth. Conditioning used alongside the other subtle advertising techniques has terrific potential.

Chapter 2

SUBLIMINAL MANIPULATION IN ADVERTISING

So, how has subliminal manipulation survived in advertising since the 1950's? Well, we have already discussed how, when and why subliminal projection the purest form of subliminal manipulation was banned. We have also seen how

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Chapter 2

THE VISUAL MANIPULATION IN ADVERTISING

The visual manipulation in advertising is a complex process. It involves the use of various techniques to create a visual image that is more appealing than the actual product. This can be done through the use of color, lighting, and composition. The visual manipulation in advertising is a complex process. It involves the use of various techniques to create a visual image that is more appealing than the actual product. This can be done through the use of color, lighting, and composition.

defective a process it was, with little proof of it 's effect. Physical impracticality was only one of the factors that led to a world-wide rejection of subliminal projection. We heard earlier of the Federal Communications Commission Report that found that some broadcasters had experimented with the process, but more had not even gone this far. So if impracticality and the lack of results led those who experimented to dump subliminal projection, what led others to discard the idea without even trying it? To answer this we must look at the implications and image of the process. From the start subliminal projection had a very bad image, just a mention of it brings up images of Orwellian manipulation and mass mind control. If we then take into account the fact that the process emerged during the 1950's, at the height of cold war paranoia we can then understand the fears of the American public. This is perfectly illustrated in "The Federal Communications Commission Information Bulletin on Subliminals" where it talks of the public concern expressed about Subliminals in the late 1950's. In this passage subliminal projection is referred to as "a technique that they alleged could be used to brainwash Americans with foreign ideologies." So it is likely that many agencies and broadcasters stayed clear of Subliminals to avoid being accused of being Communist or anti American. As it is clear that subliminal projection was widely considered to be a threat to the American way of life, this massive cultural stigma would drive many people away from using the process. As we have seen, sneaky and manipulative is how most people view Subliminals, they generally believe that it can be used to make them do things that go against their normal likes or dislikes without their being aware of it. The morality of this kind of God-like manipulation is clearly questionable as the process could be used as propaganda to move people towards any number of evil ways. Generally speaking, the idea of any subconscious manipulation, for which subliminal projection has become known through much media exposure, is so frightening that being linked with this process could destroy a company's public image. This is essentially why subliminal projection was rejected. If public opinion had not been so damning the faults in the system could perhaps have been ironed out.

This is all part of the double-talk that advertising agencies have to do, in other words tell the public it has very little effect, while telling the clients that it will transform their business overnight.

Subliminal projection was an advertising dinosaur and is rightfully extinct, even though it may have been 1950's paranoia that killed it, it hard to think of anytime since when it could have been resurrected. The 60's and 70's gave birth to

great anti government feeling that any hints of subconscious manipulation would have raised to fever pitch. The 80's was perhaps the best opportunity to return but the situation was still hostile to any fresh testing.

Although subliminal projection did die like the dinosaur it was, it has opened the door for the further exploration of subliminal communication, where motivational research paved the way for subconscious market research. Subliminal projection was the first subconscious communication system spawned by the subconscious delving of motivational research but we now have to contend with the systems that subliminal projection spawned. Though Subliminals were doomed from the start advertisers quickly learned some valuable lessons from them. The purely subliminal delivery system seemed less effective than the supraliminal systems but overt messages were easy to defend against. What advertisers were looking for was a way to harness the Subliminals manipulative potential within a supraliminal advertisement as this avoided the social stigma associated with Subliminals. For this the advertiser looked back to their Motivational Research bank and began to develop psychological triggers that they could place in everyday advertisements this is this is the logical progression from Subliminals to embeds.

Embeds are the next best known advertising technique, there has been a degree of scaremongering about them, as mentioned previously, but this has not had the widespread public recognition that the Subliminals scare had. Scandal about embeds was limited to the extremely crude end of things and yet again subtlety was totally overlooked.

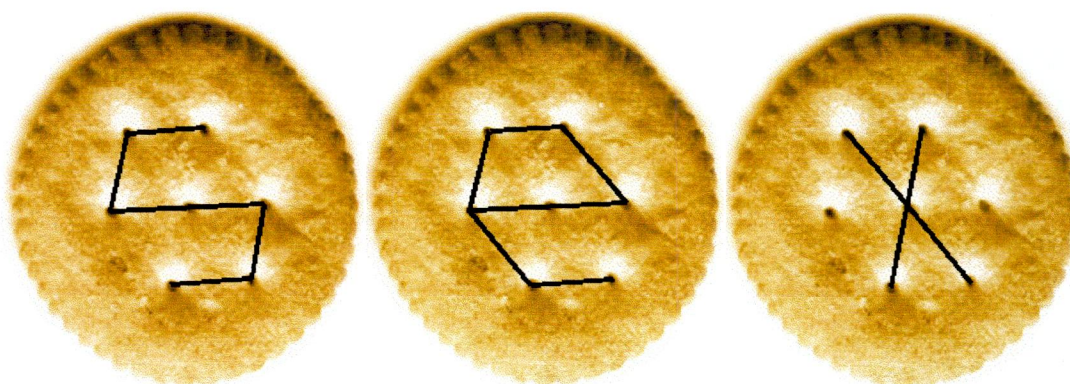


Figure 9: Ritz Crackers

It seems hard to believe that writing "sex" in icecubes or ritz crackers in order to sell the product is the apex of multi million dollar industry employing thousands of highly trained minds! Embeds can work much more subtlety than that and it

The first part of the study was a pilot study. The purpose of the pilot study was to determine the feasibility of the study and to estimate the sample size. The pilot study was conducted with 10 subjects. The results of the pilot study were used to estimate the sample size for the main study. The main study was conducted with 30 subjects. The results of the main study were used to estimate the effect size. The effect size was used to estimate the power of the study. The power of the study was found to be 0.80. The results of the study were used to estimate the effect size. The effect size was found to be 0.20. The results of the study were used to estimate the effect size. The effect size was found to be 0.20.



Figure 1: Three Graphs

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needn't even contain any hidden messages or semi-perceptible images, embeds work very effectively on a process of simple association, as with product placement, certain items in the right context communicate very powerfully. These are embeds, not the same embeds that the scandal is about but they still contain psychological triggers, to target anxieties, within the advertisement, as we can see if we look back to the earlier example. It is these triggers that embeds are all about. So are embeds the all powerful technique that subliminal projection proved not to be? Well they avoid much of the cultural stigma because no-one has really produced a convincing and wide reaching investigation. The morality, although as questionable as Subliminals, has not been seriously questioned. So it all depends on just how practical they are. Essentially this adds up to how many of these triggers will work on the majority of people. Although the core of our visual understanding is inherited most of it is learned. So the advertisers rely on similar learned responses. When the diversity of modern cultures and lifestyles are taken into account it seems that universal triggers would be extremely rare, therefore limiting this techniques practicality. But, advertiser don't target advertisements at everybody. They narrow their sights to a target audience, so the embeds only have to work on this particular group of people, therefore the possibility of finding appropriate triggers is increased. This we can apply to the earlier example, it is clearly directed at parents and home owners, so the triggers are most potent on this grouping and have little effect on the rest of us. But to find a trigger that would be effective on every one would be almost impossible, so they isolate the particular group they are interested in and target their anxieties. This technique does have a degree of usefulness, if executed properly, and is certainly more practical than subliminal projection. But because no two people are identical the process is not infallible. It is this technique or similar techniques that most modern advertisements rely on to awaken our anxieties.

Another important advertising technique is the placement of products within films and television programmes. This is not often recognised as advertising and this is partly where it's strength lies. When we are faced with an advertisement we can switch of to some extent, we might flick through channels if we are watching television. But if we do not know that someone is attempting to influence us then we can't consciously ignore it. This one of the greatest fears that subliminal projection raised and is not the only thing that product placement has in common with Subliminals. James Vicary explained that he viewed Subliminals as being a mutually beneficial progression for advertising, consumers would not have to tolerate annoying ad breaks, and advertisers

would get to promote their product while attention was at it's highest (J. Elliston, Vicary Tells All).

If we then look at product placement in films they fulfil both these ideals, is this then the new subliminal projection? If we look back to the Federal Communication Commission Reports and why they banned subliminal projection we can see that a large part of their objection was due to the fact that they felt people had a right to know who was attempting to persuade them. Have you ever seen an announcement during a film of the product promotions occurring, and it is true that companies do pay a lot of money to get their product in a film. It seem that according to the standards set when the Federal Communication Commission outlawed subliminal projection this technique should get similar treatment. But, all that seems to be stopping them is a lack of public outcry, the thing that doomed Subliminals, and this is because no one has brought product placement to the attention of the public. So we can see that through lack of publicity product placement escapes the moral and cultural questions that Subliminals stumbled upon while retaining many similar properties. So what of the practicality? If you think about it films are perfect advertisements. Every film is aimed at a particular audience, their target market, people who come to see the film, know what kind of film it is and are interested in it and therefore quite likely in the product too. Films provide much better effects and larger budgets that any advertisement could hope for. There is the automatic celebrity association with even the possibility of association with a particularly memorable character for example Aston Martin cars and James Bond. Films are also granted an amazingly high degree of attention, if it is in a cinema the lights are low and it is comfortably warm with no distractions, the products then get the full benefits of this attention as Vicary proposed. As the audience is not aware that a promotion is in progress there attention does not waver and they do not attempt to block out the persuasion. This distracted attention to the film might also increase the ability to slip messages to the subconscious and generally increase response to suggestion. Very strong associations can be made in this environment, if you think of Aviator Sunglasses the chances are you think of Tom Cruise in Top Gun. In the film The Truman Show we can see a wonderful comment on product placement within the film. In the film Jim Carey plays a man whose entire life is a television show, all the items featured on the show or used in it are for sale, and this is how things are advertised on the channel. This occurs with no interruption to the show as Vicary proposed with subliminal projection. The film gives a witty comment on a process that is has not received much media attention to date. So are all our

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consumer actions dictated to us every time we watch a film? It is not likely, there are still a few problems that prevent this process from becoming omnipotent.



Figure 10: The Truman Show

Advertisers can never have full control over what goes on in a film therefore though the persuasive power may be strong it can not be tailored to the products advantage, the product is merely inserted into the film at the most appropriate time, out of the control of the advertiser. Other small problems that prevent this from being the ideal promotional medium occur when we take the into account the volume of advertising within the film. The advertising is extremely sparse, there is a limited amount of advertising opportunities in any film. Over exploitation of product placement could also be very dangerous, because pushing the process to the extent where it becomes noticeable could provoke a backlash that would lead to similar ends as the public outcry did with subliminal projection. So the advertiser must live in fear of being discovered lest their brightest new toy be taken away from them before they get the chance to fully exploit and explore it.

As we can see all these techniques have advantages and disadvantages, none are perfect but still we should not underestimate their persuasive power for we spend millions on unnecessary products every year. It is a proven fact that advertising increases sales even though in many cases it increases prices also. As it is important that we do not underestimate advertisements advertisers find it vitally important that they do not underestimate us. There is a constant war being waged on our minds advertisements attempt to persuade us in new ways and we retaliate with growing cynicism. We have developed a form of bullet proofing through prolonged and indeed lifelong exposure to advertisements. As we said earlier, product placement in films gains a vital advantage by not being

considered advertisements, because when we are faced with an advertisement we automatically begin to doubt and question everything we see and hear. This is what the advertising agencies are up against and we in turn are faced with their creative expertise. It is like an escalating cold war, as soon as one side develops something new the other acts to counter it. Leading to a constant struggle for supremacy. This is all a result of the conditioning that advertisers seek to use to their advantage, by the time we reach adolescence most of us already dismiss the advertisers claims, but to what extent we can ever learn to constrain our subconscious is still a problem. A problem that advertisers thrive on! But despite our subconscious prodding, purchases require a degree of conscious thought in which we must rationalise our subconscious wants. This is a battle on which a lot of money is wagered, and that is why Marshal McLuhan points out "Far more thought and care go into the composition of any prominent advertisement in a newspaper or magazine than into the writing of their features and editorials." (M. McLuhan, 1964, page 228)

Neither side can afford to lose and as it is with stand-offs neither side can afford to back down or the other might seize the opportunity for victory. So as advertising becomes part of our everyday life in an attempt to influence us by the principal that "a small pellet of pattern in a noisy redundant barrage of repetition will gradually exert itself." (M. McLuhan, 1964, page 227) We in turn react similarly to the women in the supermarket, by glazing over. So advertisers attempt to shock us out of our cynicism, and what is shocking gone day is dull the next. It is an ongoing war with no foreseeable conclusion. These shock tactics can be illustrated by looking at the progress of Benneton advertisements in recent years. They have moved from the united colours theme picturing inter-racial unity to using shocking news images in some attempt at social commentary. Their desire to maintain public attention has led them into a series of shock images with no product relation. To assume this is just the Benneton advertising team losing their way is perhaps a little naive or short-sighted. This is in fact one of the most memorable and recognizable advertising campaigns in recent years. Maybe there is some use in these shock tactics or the media coverage they generate or maybe there is more to this campaign than we at first assume. Firstly the point must be made again that this is a very competitive industry that has little time for unsuccessful ventures, so we should not underestimate any attempts to persuade us. The fact that a multinational company like Benneton has supported this campaign for so long suggests that they at least see it as being profitable, and if they see it as profitable it is because it has succeeded in persuading us to buy their product.

So in what way has this campaign been successful, first of all there is the media attention that we mentioned earlier, this helps to embed the name in our subconscious' by the pellet in the noise theory. Another important factor to look at is the image the campaign gives its product. Images are created by associated pictures so what image can these pictures create for Benneton. The pictures present themselves as some sort of social commentary as mentioned earlier, so they can give an image of a company with a social conscious. This is an image that some people will like and relate to and therefore feel that Benneton are the clothes for them. There is also a degree of rebellion in this image, we are usually at our most socially active in our teens and this sort of change the world attitude is common in teenagers. The company seems to be trying to lose the image that people might previously have had of them, Benneton are essentially a luxury clothing company often seen as over priced and very middle class. Here they are trying to freshen their image with their rebellious save the world, against the system,



Figures 11-16: Benneton

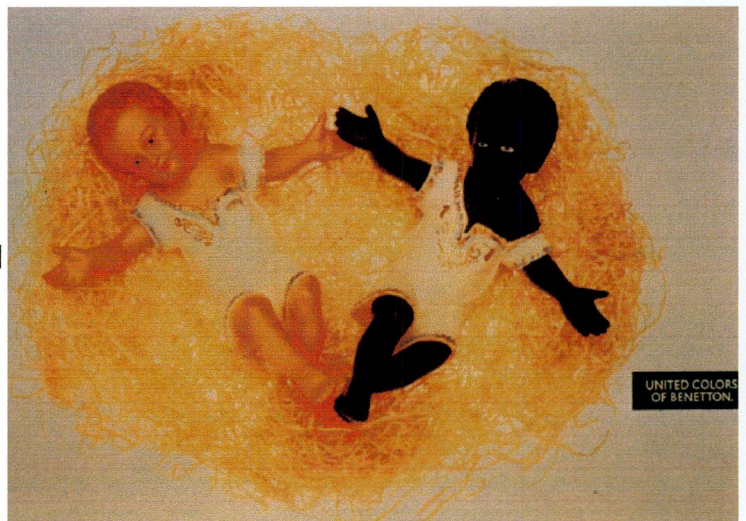


Figure 12

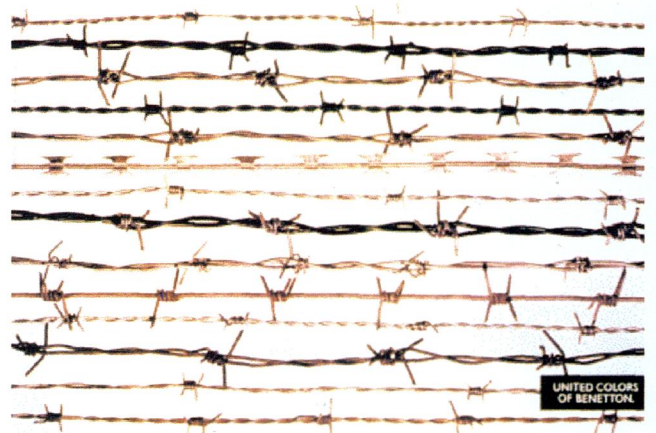


Figure 13

attitude. So this is essentially an image based campaign. The use of imagery is still however very interesting, the lack of clear link to the product breaks down logical attempts to challenge the associations that are made. Here we are faced with an interesting point about product and image linkage, and product and image association.

Traditionally the associations that advertisers would try to establish would have an obvious link to the product as this it seems would make more sense and provide a more profitable outcome. The problem is that once people understand what you are saying they can challenge it more easily, if they don't understand then they cannot. There is one other area of advertising that uses this practice. Images with little or no link to the product are common in cigarette advertising as they are limited by regulation on what they can portray. Tobacco advertising has developed a disjointed surrealistic approach which has proved very effective as discussed earlier. This absence of logical linkage is what Benneton are hoping to use to their advantage here



Figure 14



Figure 15



Figure 16

much as the cigarette advertisements do, absence of clear reason in the advertisement prevents the application of reason in challenging the associations being made. Thus Benneton can harness the image and anxieties in these pictures in a more directly subconscious manner. This marks an important development in advertising as the industry moves further towards the surreal in order to bypass our conscious defences.

As advertising and our resistance to it's advances, there develops in modern culture a greater diversity of potential markets than ever before. There could be numerous reasons for this, it could be in response to the huge choice and variety in the present swamped market place or just in relation to the greater cultural interaction and overlap in modern society or simply the sheer number of potential consumers. Whatever the cause of it this diversity allows the advertiser to home in on target markets with startling accuracy. In this way advertisers can isolate specific group interests and motivations and in a sense separate us from the herd. When we look back to the psychological triggers used in advertising this development has disturbing consequences. Specific subcultures have become valuable enough markets for advertisers to single them out and tailor make campaigns to seduce those who have been ignored in the past. One section of society that has been of particular interest to the advertisers for some time now is children. Children are the consumers of today and the buyers of tomorrow. Although children do not directly buy the products they use, they have great influence on that is bought for them. So it is a long established tradition to try to create brand loyalty among kids so that it will continue into adulthood. For as long as I can remember I have preferred Wrangler jeans. I tell myself that it is because they are made in a shape that fits me better, but I am, as I mentioned earlier rationalising my motivations. Somewhere along the way probably, in my early teens Wrangler won me over and I am still loyal. This targeting the young is something that alcohol and cigarette makers are constantly accused of, which of course they strongly deny. As Anne Marie Seward Barry quotes from the US Public Health Service "most smokers become addicted to cigarettes when they are minors, and if people do not start smoking by the time that are eighteen or nineteen the probability is that they will not start at all." (A.M. Seward Barry, 1997, page 275) This is a damning statistic especially when you consider that the World Health Organisation estimates that half of all adolescents who continue to smoke will die because of it. The fact that few people start smoking after the age of nineteen gives an insight on how the adult rationale reacts to attempts to initiate the habit. Either cigarette advertisements are ineffective on adults or simply not aimed at them.



When we consider the wealth of techniques at the cigarette advertisers disposal it would take an amazingly strong conscious objection to the product to generate such a blanket reaction. So it seems in reference to cigarette advertisements we are at our most vulnerable during our teenage years, we can be persuaded to do something that we consciously know to be totally irrational and that is probably why few adults begin smoking. It is quite likely that all relevant advertising is similarly more effective on teenagers and much of our adult views and activities are influenced by this.

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Conclusion

So we have seen the wide ranging subconscious and subliminal tools and techniques at the advertising industry's disposal. We have also seen the shortcomings of these techniques. With subliminal projection there is the extreme social stigma attached to the process along with the lack of sound evidence of its effects. Embeds raise problems with regard to the universal application of the triggers needed for the process and the reliability of predicted reactions. Product placement is the most problem free of the processes suffering only in the restrictions of its application, lack of control and little available advertising space. Every new development poses new problems. So is it an Orwellian future with big brother pulling the strings? Advertising certainly has a long way to go before it can control our every action, as A.A. Berger testifies," An advertising executive told me 'probably half the money spent on advertising is wasted ... But nobody knows which half'."(A.A. Berger, 1996, page 57) One thing that psychoanalysis has taught the advertising world is that we are unpredictable and illogical animals. We have seen that the majority of advertising is engaged in attempting to manipulate and influence our subconscious minds, but this not an easy task and by no means an exact science. Although agencies may indulge in all kinds of depth probing and semi scientific techniques success is still measured in pounds and dollars.

Anxieties still remain a vital link in this chain of influence. Every technique relies on generation of anxieties no matter what the product or medium is. The simple process of generating anxieties and presenting the product as the antidote is the basis of all modern advertising. This is something brought into general use by Motivational Research and has remained constant ever since. All the techniques studied here are simply ways to awaken these anxieties in the subtlest and most effective way, the core idea is the same it is only the application that differs.

So what about the future, surely the advertisement agencies will eventually master their subconscious techniques and learn our every motivation and peculiarity. Well it does seem that their measures grow in complexity every day but with this complexity comes more complex problems and as these are solved with yet more complex solutions the advertisers enter into a vicious circle. An example of this in practice is, that with the extreme subtlety of motivational triggers being used in modern advertising some agencies began to notice that they weren't getting the reactions they expected from the embeds they had

planted. When they analysed the advertisements and the reactions they noticed that other elements in the advertisements instead of the expected triggers were prompting a response. This leads the advertiser into a difficult situation where if they want to be subtle enough to slip past the consumers defences then even the tiniest details of the advertisement must be carefully considered or it may corrupt the intended message or generate an independent one. So as for future developments it seems that life will get more and more complicated for the ad-men, and of course let us not under-estimate the human race's ability to adapt. It is his adaptation that has brought us to the head of the food chain, this adaptability has changed the automobile from a wild dream to an everyday item in less than fifty years, likewise the computer. The significant thing is that we do not just use these things we totally accept them, never consciously questioning their ability or presence. When this adaptability is coupled with the Cold War paranoia and general xenophobia of that time, new developments are faced with some very tough opposition as the fate of subliminal projection proves. When we take into account our amazing adaptability it is strange that xenophobia should have such a strong hold on us, but this fear of the unknown is also a prominent force in society. So we fear these persuasive techniques that we don't understand and the advertisers have a stigma to deal with but once we understand the processes and how they work the bulletproofing and adaptability we possess quickly erode the potency of these processes. But the race is still continuing, we saw earlier how Benneton have attempted to introduce a new twist on the old techniques. They rely heavily on the break down of logic in their composition so that it is more difficult for the consumer to logically challenge what they are saying. This is certainly an interesting development it seems to be a refinement of the more common techniques, and how we can bulletproof against this is hard to imagine. The technique bypasses the conscious and target solely the subconscious, therefore no conscious thinking can have any significant effect at stopping it. We have however, enough subconscious peculiarities to keep the advertising agencies occupied trying to perfect this new development for quite some time. It is likely that by the time they fully grasp this technique we will have developed some degree of immunity to it as is the pattern of this advertising war.

This is what drives the ad-men to extremes, our uncanny ability to adjust to a new development as if they had always been there and our distrust of anything we do not understand. So, if you consider that there must be a finite amount of things advertising can do to influence us and how many our adaptability has already made obsolete, then perhaps it is the ad-men who have a dark future.

But it is safe to say that it will take a long time for the creative minds in the advertising industry to exhaust all their options. We can be sure that advertising can get even more subversive and covert and that Subliminals still have a large part to play.

But it is safe to say that we take a long time for the creative mind to find
a way to express its ideas. It can be said that all of the
great art ever made has been a result of the creative mind.

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5. *The History of the County of Kent*. By John Gough Nichols. 1827.
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Articles

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