The Impact of Subliminal Cues on Gender-Neutral Advertisements

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INTRODUCTION

The increasing flux of advertisements and distractions in everyday life has caused advertisers to search for a new edge in marketing that attracts customers. One potential advantage can be found in subliminal cues, or subtle signals below our threshold of recognition which may impact everyday decisions. The question is do subliminal cues have an impact on gender-neutral advertisements?

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

Research has shown that in a lab setting with few variables, subliminal advertising has an impact on subjects. However, when applied to the general public, the advertisements have little effect. Experiments conducted on the public often advertise a certain brand, leading to factors such as brand preference prior to the experiment.

An experiment done by BBC involved about 100 participants who watched a short film upon entering a theatre. Half of these people, the control group, saw a clip, and when they left, were offered water or Lipton Iced Tea. The other half was shown the same clip, but spliced throughout were split-second images of the Lipton logo. This was supposed to incentivize people, on a subliminal level, to pick the iced tea when they left the theatre. The researcher found that there was little difference between the control and test group. He acknowledged that there were factors that weren’t under control, such as predisposition for or against the tea, as well as overall thirst level, which could have affected the results (Unknown, 2015).

In a survey with gender-neutral advertisements, subliminal cues advertising towards either men or women were woven into the pictures. In the survey, the person taking it marked if they were male, female, or other. The survey results will show whether they prefer the advertisements subliminally marketed towards their gender, have no preference, or prefer those marketed to the other gender when compared to the baseline of the original images.

METHODS

The survey has twenty questions about ten products. Ten of the advertisements are unaltered. The images repeat, but have subliminal cues targeting either men or women. These are the altered images. The altered and unaltered questions appear in a random order. The data is ranked on a scale from one to ten, but appear with qualitative values to the people taking the survey. To analyze the data, the value from the unaltered image is subtracted from altered image. By looking at the positive, negative, or lack of change between the scores from both images, it is possible to determined if there was a change due to the subliminal cues.

RESULTS

Figure 1: Difference Between Men’s Ratings for Original and Altered Advertisements

Based on this graph, it can be seen that, on average, men gave subliminally altered advertisements a higher rating. On the other hand, women were more inclined to give altered advertisements a lower rating.

Figure 2: Difference Between Women’s Ratings for Original and Altered Advertisements

For the men, there was a positive correlation between the altered advertisements targeting men and the rating given. For women, there was a negative correlation. On average, men gave four of the six objects marketed to them a positive difference of 1.6, and the other two -0.66. Of the objects marketed towards women, men gave two a positive rating and two a negative rating, with the averages being 0.33 and -0.79 respectively.

For women, three of the objects marketed towards them were given a negative difference average of -0.89 and only one a positive swing of 1.5. Similarly, with the objects marketed towards men, four were given a negative value of -1.09 and two a positive value of 1.02.

Figure 3: Average Difference for Men and Women

On average, men gave higher ratings than women.

DATA ANALYSIS

Figure 4: Gender Analysis

Women accounted for roughly ½ of the total survey participants, whereas men were closer to ⅓.

Figure 5: Age Analysis

There was an even spread of age.

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Works Cited


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