

Chapter 15: Esoteric Forms of Persuasion

Key Terms and Concepts

aposematism (red is a warning sign in nature)	placebo effect
meanings and connotations associated with color	backward masking
red pen effect	advertising via associations
color as a form of branding	neurolinguistic programming
color and ethnicity	primary representational system
whiteness	visual vs. auditory consumers
colorism	music as a central and peripheral cue
color complex	musical fit
color and emotion	mere exposure effect
warm vs. cool colors	music and branding
uniform colors	musical fit
color and behavior	mere exposure effect
color-aggression link	music as a mnemonic device
car color and traffic citations	background music and shopping pace
subliminal versus supraliminal messages	habituation
product placements vs. subliminal ads	music videos as persuasion
presence ≠ effectiveness	weaponizing music
embedded images	aroma as persuasion
subliminal priming	selling romance through fragrances
masked prime	fragrances and attraction
subliminal prime	fragrances and arousal
target word	ambient aromas and mood
priming and prior need or drive	ambient aromas and task performance
subaudible messages	ambient aromas and shopping behavior

Chapter Summary

Color

- I. Color affects attitudes, beliefs, intentions, and behaviors in significant ways.
 - A. The color red often signifies danger, both in nature and in society.
 - B. Colors have strong associations; brides wear white, green signifies eco-friendliness, red states vs. blue states, etc.

- II. The color red has multiple meanings and associations.
 - A. Grading papers with a red pen (the red pen effect) results in more rigorous grading.
 - B. red clothing is perceived as more sexy.

- III. Color is used as a form of branding; companies copyright colors associated with their brands.
 - A. Examples include UPS' Pullman brown, Owens-Corning pink, Tiffany's robin's egg blue.

- IV. Color or skin tone confers social advantages. "Whiteness," for example, is privileged over "Blackness."
 - A. Preference for lighter skin tone over darker skin tone is referred to as colorism.
 - B. Colorism is not synonymous with racism
 - C. Colorism is not unique to the United States; many cultures favor lighter over darker skin tone.
 - D. Color complex refers to within culture preferences for lighter over darker skin tone.
 - 1) within the African-American community, for example, lighter Blacks enjoy socio-economic advantages over darker Blacks.

V. Color is associated with a variety of moods and emotions.

- A. Warm colors evoke activity, arousal
- B. Cool colors are more calming and relaxing
- C. People respond differently to others based on uniform colors

VI. Color affects behavior in subtle and not so subtle ways.

- A. A color-product mismatch can be off-putting to consumers.
- B. Taste preferences may be based, in part, on the color of food containers.

VII. Wearing black uniforms may elicit more aggression in sports teams than wearing white uniforms, dubbed the color-aggression link.

VIII. Contrary to popular thinking, car color is not associated with a greater likelihood of receiving a traffic ticket.

Subliminal Influence

I. A message may be subtle without necessarily being subliminal.

- A. Subliminal messages are processed without conscious awareness.
- B. Supraliminal messages are subtle, or faint, but are still processed consciously.
 - 1) Product planting in movies and TV shows involves supraliminal processing, not subliminal stimuli.

II. There is widespread public belief that subliminal messages are both prevalent and effective.

- A. Public belief dates back to claims of subliminal effects made by James Vicary in the 1950s.
- B. Vicary's "study" was non-scientific and his results were never replicated.
- C. In the 1970s and 1980s, Brian Wilson Key renewed interest in subliminal persuasion, but his approach was questionable.
- D. Occasional documented cases of subliminal images appear to be the exception, rather than the rule (pranks, mostly).
- E. Few of the studies reporting significant findings have been successfully replicated.
- F. Embedded or hidden images have no effect on consumers.
- G. The mere existence of subliminal messages does not demonstrate their effectiveness.

III. While subliminal messages are generally ineffective, controlled laboratory studies on subliminal priming has demonstrated results.

- A. Subliminal priming involves flashing a fleeting message just prior to a target message.
- B. Subliminal priming can elicit temporary changes in mood, or enhance performance on word recognition tasks.
- C. A prior need or drive tends aids the technique known as priming.
- D. Priming has little value from an advertising or marketing standpoint because the effects are quite small and only temporary.
- B. Sub-audible messages also appear to produce no demonstrable effects. Any changes observed are attributable to the placebo effect.
- C. There is no scientific proof that backward-masked recordings induce changes in moods or behavior.

IV. Advertisers and marketers are far more interested in overt persuasion, via images and associations, than in subliminal stimuli.

NLP

VII. Neurolinguistic programming (NLP), which is a mix of linguistics, psychology, and hypnotism, suggests that the unconscious mind determines the attitudes and behaviors of individuals.

- A. A person's primary representational system is activated through the five senses. Visually or auditory oriented messages are thought to alert the unconscious.
- B. NLP is not a reliable theory as its evidence relies too much on faulty sign reasoning.

Music and Persuasion

- I. Although ignored by many textbooks, music is a key ingredient in real-life persuasion.
 - A. Song lyrics can persuade via the central route. They can be thought about and reflected upon.
 - B. Typically, however, music persuades via the peripheral route. A song is heard, yet not actively attended to.
- II. Music is widely used in advertising to facilitate persuasion.
 - A. Music is used to reinforce product images and associations. Congruency, or how the music fits the brand, enhances the music's effectiveness.
 - B. Music persuades according to the mere exposure hypothesis, which states that repeated exposure to a stimulus tends to increase liking for the stimulus.
 - 1) Excessive repetition can backfire as it decreases liking for a product.
 - C. Music often functions as a mnemonic device or memory cue.
 - 1) This is because lyrics in a song are often translated phonetically (e.g., as mere sounds) rather than semantically (as meanings).
 - D. Background music is used by retailers to influence consumer behavior, although consumers may become habituated (desensitized) to music.
- III. Music videos and MTV have clearly had a significant effect on fashions, tastes, and trends of adolescent viewers.
 - A. Music videos have been criticized for glorifying materialism and perpetuating sexism.
 - B. Defenders say music videos merely mirror society, and argue that music makes social statements and promotes social change.
 - C. Rap music, in particular, has received much criticism. Nevertheless, it is difficult to deny its impact on the attitudes, beliefs, intentions, motivations, and behaviors of juveniles.
- IV. The practice of utilizing music as a weapon to drive away teens, panhandlers, gangs, and the homeless from fast food restaurants and convenience stores is temporarily effective, yet ethical considerations have been raised.
- V. To be effective, music must be adapted to listeners' tastes and preferences, the particular message, and the particular setting. Music primarily serves as a supplement to verbal messages.

Aromas and Persuasion

- I. Although scholars in the field of communication rarely, if ever, explore the topic, aromas and fragrances play a significant role in persuasion.
 - A. Fragrance manufacturing is a multi-billion dollar industry.
 - B. Fragrance manufacturers sell idealized, romantic images as much as fragrances.
 - C. Some studies suggest that perfume increases attraction, while other studies suggest that it does not.
 - D. It is important to note individual differences for scent preferences as well as consider that scent is one of many factors that produce attraction.
- II. Ambient aromas have been shown to affect people in a variety of ways.
 - A. Ambient aromas can alter physiological processes, such as arousal.
 - B. Ambient aromas have been shown to affect people's moods, for example, by making them feel more relaxed.
 - C. Ambient aromas have been shown to improve task performance.
 - D. Ambient aromas can affect consumers' shopping pace and make them linger longer in stores and restaurants. It has been suggested that pleasant aromas may put gamblers at ease, in which they will feel lucky, and consequently increase their spending.
- III. Generalizations about the effects of aromas on receivers must be guarded.
 - A. There are tremendous individual differences in the way people respond to smells.
 - B. Repeated exposure to a given fragrance may result in desensitization, or create an aversion to the smell.
 - C. There are ethical implications and health-related issues related to the use of ambient aromas to persuade people.
 - D. Although one would like to think that the future looks bright for aroma peddlers, smells can only do so much.