



**The role of subliminal messages in advertisements on
changing consumer buying behaviour: with focus on
young South-African consumers.**

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I hereby declare that the Research Report submitted for the BA Honours in Strategic Brand Communication degree to The Independent Institute of Education is my own work and has not previously been submitted to another University Institution for degree purposes.

Abstract

Subliminal advertising is a phenomenon that has been extensively researched over the past few years. There are many controversies regarding the roles and effectiveness of subliminal advertising. The role of subliminal messages in advertisements, in changing consumer buying behaviour is vague. There is uncertainty of how subliminal messages can be implemented in advertisements, in order to change consumer buying behaviour. This study addressed this problem by determining the roles of subliminal messages in advertisements, through means of a mixed methods study. Data was collected through online surveys, and in-depth interviews in order to gain a detailed understanding of the roles of subliminal messages in advertisements. This study focused specifically on an emotional appeal, as well as a sex appeal. Print advertisements was utilized in conducting this study, as the focus of this study is on static advertisements. It was found that subliminal messages in advertisements plays no significant role in changing consumer buying behaviour. This study focused specifically on young South African consumers.

Key words

Subliminal advertising; print advertisements; emotional appeal; sex appeal; consumer buying behaviour.

Table of contents

Section 1: Introduction.....	1
Structure of the paper	1
Background	1
Research rationale.....	2
Conceptualisation	3
Problem statement.....	3
Research Goal.....	4
Research Question	5
Research Objectives.....	5
Overview of research methodology	5
Section 2: Literature review.....	6
Theoretical foundation	6
Review of literature	8
Section 3: Research Methodology	13
Critical realism as research paradigm.....	13
Research Design	15
Population.....	16
Sampling.....	17
Data collection methods	18
Data analysis methods	22
Section 4: Findings and discussion	24
Findings from quantitative research.....	24
Findings from qualitative research	34
Summary of findings	41

Validity, reliability and trustworthiness	42
Section 5: Conclusion.....	44
Research Question, Problem and Goals addressed.....	44
Scope for future research	45
Limitations to the study	45
Ethical considerations.....	46
Conclusions	47
Bibliography	48

List of figures

Figure 1: Johnnie Walker Black Label Scotch advertisement (Kerouac, 2019).	60
Figure 2: An isolated image of the monster found in the first ice cube (Kerouac, 2019).	61
Figure 3: An isolated image of the Ace of Spades found within an ice cube (Kerouac, 2019).	61
Figure 4: Isolated image of screaming man found within an ice cube (Kerouac, 2019).	61
Figure 5: Advertisement 2 (Tsitsuashvili, 2017).	62
Figure 6: Perception of the brand before viewing the advertisement.....	23
Figure 7: Likeliness to use brand before viewing the advertisement.....	24
Figure 8: Perception of the brand after viewing the advertisement.....	24
Figure 9: Likeliness to make use of the brand after viewing the advertisement.....	25
Figure 10: Perception of the brand before viewing the advertisement.	27
Figure 12: Perception of the brand after viewing the advertisement.	28
Figure13: Likeliness to make use of the brand after viewing the advertisement.	28
Figure 14: Emotional impact of advertisement.	29
Figure 15: Feelings provoked by advertisement.....	30
Figure 16: Emotional impact of advertisement.	30
Figure 17: Emotion provoked by advertisement.	31
Figure 18: Awareness of subliminal advertising.	32
Figure 19: Interpretation of subliminal messages.	32

Figure 10: Effectiveness of subliminal advertising.....	32
Figure 11: Influence of subliminal advertising.	33
Figure 22: Ethical nature of subliminal advertisements.	34

List of tables

Table 1: Advertisement 1 themes.....	36
Table 2: Advertisement 2 Themes	37
Table 3: Subliminal advertising effectiveness Themes.....	38

List of Appendices

Appendix A: Summary Table.....	57
Appendix B: Ethics Clearance Letter.....	58
Appendix C: Originality report	59
Appendix D: Advertisements	60
Appendix E: Survey.....	63
Appendix F: Interview guide	70
Appendix G: Respondent consent forms.....	72
Appendix H: Questionnaire Responses.....	77
Appendix I: Interview transcripts	82

Section 1: Introduction

Structure of the paper

In this paper the researcher provides a clear introduction to the research problem, by providing background and by contextualising key concepts. The research problem is explained, along with the research goals and objectives. Thereafter, the researcher evaluates current literature in the field of subliminal advertising in the literature review section (section 2). The research methodology that was utilized in conducting this study is explained and applied to this study.

The research design will be discussed along with the sampling methods and population utilized in this study. Data collection and analysis methods is also thoroughly explained in the research design section. The findings are presented in section four of this research paper. All research questions are answered in the conclusion section, and recommendations to future research is made.

Background

The first subliminal advertisement attempts in 1957 when James Vicary inserted the words 'Drink Coca-Cola' and 'Eat Popcorn' into cinema previews, claimed to have a 18.1% increase in Coca-Cola sales and a 57.8% increase in popcorn sales. This turned out to be fake results (Sofi, Nika, Shah and Zarger, 2018). More recent subliminal advertisement attempts have shown that subliminal messages have an effect on consumer buying behaviour (Soomro, 2018:1820). There has been long controversy regarding the role of subliminal messages in advertisements, as some studies have shown that they do play a role in changing consumer buying behaviour while others show no sign of the effectiveness thereof (Chattopadhyay and Mukherjee 2018:12).

The aim of this study was to determine whether subliminal messages inserted into print advertisements plays any role in changing consumer buying behaviour. In conducting this study, the researcher aimed to investigate the phenomenon of subliminal advertising and to apply it to a South African context. The researcher is of

meaning that subliminal advertising is effective and that it can be taken to greater extents in order to effectively and accurately communicate with consumers.

This topic is related to the researcher's field of study; strategic brand communication, as subliminal advertisements is a method used by brands to communicate to their target market as well as to the larger population (Verwijmeren, Karremans, Stroebe, and Wigboldus, 2011).

Research rationale

Companies in South Africa make use of many different media forms to promote their brand and get their message across to the consumer. The methods used to convey a message is broad and includes methods like emotional advertising, celebrity endorsement, sex appeal, story-telling, professional opinion etc. (de Oliveira, Lundberg and Viktorsson, 2016:32). The main purpose of advertising, however, is to inform and convince consumers to make use of a brand (Ansari and Riasi, 2016:22). The aim of this research study was to determine whether subliminal messages in advertisements plays any role in persuading consumers, and ultimately leading to a change in their buying behaviour. Although there are many different media types being used, this study focused on static, print advertisements. By determining the role of subliminal messages in advertisements, marketers in South Africa are enabled to utilize the knowledge gained in order to improve their advertising strategy. They can become more effective in changing consumer perceptions and buying behaviour.

Marketing professionals in South Africa and all around the world aims to persuade consumers to choose their product or brand (Briñol, Rucker and Petty, 2015:86). Marketing professionals try to find new ways in doing so and they are always trying to be innovative, relevant and effective in their marketing attempts (Harmeling, Moffett, Arnold and Carlson, 2017:313). By determining the role of subliminal messages in advertisements, the researcher was able to make a recommendation as to how marketers will be able to utilize this tactic in their marketing and communication attempts.

Subliminal advertising is a topic that has been extensively researched over the last few decades and there are many literatures available on the topic. There is however, only a few studies conducted regarding subliminal advertisements in a South African context. The role of subliminal messages in advertisements is vague as most studies only address the different types of subliminal messages. This study adds to the body of knowledge by filling the gap identified, as this study was conducted with specific focus on young South African consumers and focused on the role of subliminal advertising on changing consumer buying behaviour.

Conceptualisation

The following definitions are provided as they are the main concepts that the reader will come across in this research paper. The relevance of all these concepts is clearly explained and defined in the literature review section.

Subliminal messages can be defined as messages that is not perceived by the conscious mind and the viewer of the message is not able to consciously evaluate what is happening to him or her (Mladenović, *et al* 2016:40; Chattopadhyay *et al* 2018:12).

A print advertisement is any static advertisement that can be found within newspapers, magazines, online publications, billboards or any other form of static published advertisements (Mogaji, 2016:10).

Consumer buying behaviour refers to the buying behaviour, decisions and patterns of a consumer towards a product or brand (Ramya and Mohamed, 2016:76).

Problem statement

Many brands and organisations make use of subliminal messages in their advertising attempts (Briñol *et al* 2015:86). This is a phenomenon that has been extensively researched over the past few decades. However, the role of subliminal messages in advertisements in changing consumer buying behaviour is vague. There is uncertainty

of how subliminal messages can be implemented in advertisements, in order to change consumer buying behaviour. Many marketing professionals are not aware of the roles and uses of subliminal messages and are not currently using it to the advantage of their brand (Mladenović, Marković and Ljajić, 2016:40). Mladenović *et al* (2016:40) is of meaning that this is a disadvantage that many companies currently face, as they are not advertising as effectively as they possibly could be. Although many research studies have been conducted related to subliminal advertisements, only few studies, if any, are related to the South African context. The focus of this study is therefore on young South African consumers.

The purpose of this study is to gain an in-depth understanding of the roles of subliminal messages in advertisements in changing consumer buying behaviour, with specific focus on the South African context. A basic research study was conducted in order to expand the current base of research (Bentley, Gulbrandsen, and Kyvik, 2015).

Research Goal

The purpose of this study was to gain an understanding of the role of subliminal messages in print advertisements, such as magazine advertisements, newspaper advertisements, flyers and posters. The researcher aimed to clarify whether subliminal messages inserted into these advertisements plays any role in changing consumer buying behaviour. This was determined by focussing mainly on advertisements containing elements of sex appeal and emotional appeal.

This study addressed the long controversy regarding subliminal advertisements. The perceptions that consumers have about the actions and emotions provoked in subliminal advertisements was studied, and the likelihood thereof to change consumer buying behaviour was determined. The research obtained from this study was used to advice marketers about the roles of subliminal messages in advertisements.

Research Question

Primary research question:

In what ways does the use of subliminal messages in advertisements, play a role in changing consumer buying behaviour?

Secondary research questions:

1. What is the relation between subliminal messages in advertisements and consumer buying behaviour?
2. Are young South African consumers aware of the role of subliminal messages in advertisements?
3. Is subliminal advertising perceived by consumers as being ethically correct?

Research Objectives

The main research objectives for this research study regarding the roles of subliminal messages inserted into advertisements are as follows:

1. To determine whether subliminal messages in advertisements play a role in changing consumer buying behaviour.
2. To observe the ways in which subliminal messages play a role in changing consumer buying behaviour.
3. To determine whether consumers are aware of the roles of subliminal messages in advertisements.
4. To determine whether consumers perceive subliminal advertising as being ethically correct.

Overview of research methodology

The researcher made use of a mixed method approach in order to conduct research for this study. The research was conducted in Pretoria, South Africa with specific focus on young South African consumers (between the ages of 18 and 35 years old). Qualitative data was collected by means of in-depth interviews and quantitative data was collected by means of online surveys. Data was analysed using thematic analysis and the automatic data analysis provided by google forms. A detailed discussion on methodology is provided in Chapter 3.

Section 2: Literature review

Theoretical foundation

The AIDA (awareness, interest, desire, action) model was utilized as theory in conducting this study, in order to understand the stages the consumer goes through from the first stage of viewing an advertisement to the final stage of buying a product. This model explains how the consumer is moved along a linear continuum of internal states, from being completely unaware of a certain product or brand to gaining awareness thereof, interest is then elicited and a desire to make use of the brand arise (Hackley and Hackley 2017:28). The consumer is stirred to take action by engaging with the product in the form of a purchase.

The AIDA model was originally designed by Elmo Lewis to represent the stages through which a prospect should be taken by a salesperson, but was later adopted as a framework to explain how persuasive communication takes place in the mind of the consumer (Wijaya 2015:76). Hadiyati (2016:50) states that this theory is mainly utilized in marketing attempts such as advertisements in order to educate consumers about a certain brand. It attempts to convince them to make a purchase decision. For the purpose of this study, the researcher used the AIDA model to determine the role of subliminal messages in advertisements, by viewing the consumer decision making process from the first interaction with the advertisement to the final stage (action) of the AIDA model.

For the purpose of this study the following descriptions of the components of the AIDA model was take into consideration:

Awareness can be defined as the ability of a marketer to attract focus to an advertisement (Venkatraman, Dimoka, Pavlou, Vo, Hampton, Bollinger, Hershfield, Ishihara, and Winer 2015:438). During this stage the consumer is made aware of a product or brand. Any given advertising stimulus should draw the attention of the consumer in order to be successful. Common measures of attention are liking, informativeness, excitability and relevancy of the advertisement (Rehman, Nawaz, Ilyas and Hyder 2014:39).

Interest refers to the outward expression of emotion. In this stage the consumer is already aware of the brand and will begin to gather further information in order to learn more about the brand (Venkatraman *et al.* 438). Desire refers to the extent to which people desire a product or a brand featured in the advertisement (Ghirvu 2013:93). Purchase intent is a strong measure of desirability. In the action stage of the AIDA model, the consumer makes a purchase decision or begins to interact with the brand through social media, website visits, in store visits etc. (Ghirvu 2013:94). This is the stage where a purchase decision is made (action is taken) if the advertisement attempts were successful.

The AIDA model is relevant to be used as theoretical foundation in this study as this explains the same process that will take place in the minds of consumers' when viewing an advertisement containing subliminal messages. The aim of advertisements containing subliminal messages, is to attract the attention of the consumer and provoke an interest for a product or brand, awareness will therefore be obtained (Elegeert 2018:1). The end goal of this study is to determine whether consumers lead into taking action and making a purchase decision for a brand after viewing an advertisement containing subliminal messages. According to Montazeribarforoushi, Keshavarzsaleh and Ramsøy (2017:1363343), the world of advertising has become aggressively competitive, nevertheless, the principles behind consumers' responses to advertising remain intact and relevant.

The research problem of this study is to determine the role of subliminal messages in advertisements in changing consumer buying behaviour. Utilizing the AIDA model addressed this problem by allowing the researcher to determine the role of subliminal messages, when viewing consumer behaviour and perceptions during each stage of the AIDA model (Wolny and Charoensuksai 2014:318). According to Hassan, Nadzim and Sirajuddin (2015:265) this model is useful in assessing the impact and role of advertisements by controlling every step of the psychological transformation, that starts from the first encounter with an advertisement at individual level, up to the stage where a consumer makes a purchase decision. This model has been utilized by marketing professionals for centuries and has gone through a variety of modifications, however, the basic principles of this model still remains relevant (Rehman *et al.* 2014:39).

Review of literature

The word subliminal is a combination of the words sub, meaning under and limen, meaning threshold (Sandoval, Torresand Castillo 2018:25). Subliminal can therefore be defined as below threshold, or something that cannot be perceived by the conscious mind. Subliminal messages can be defined as messages that is not perceived by the conscious mind, and the viewer of the message is not able to consciously evaluate what is happening to him or her (Mladenović, *et al* 2016:40; Chattopadhyay *et al* 2018:12). According to Haider and Shakib (2017:1) the aim of advertising is to influence buying behaviour by creating associations and forming memories about a brand in the minds of consumers. Over the years consumer responses to advertising has changed and new message delivering channels are being implemented (Daugherty, Hoffman, Kennedy, and Nolan 2018:183). This study examined subliminal messages as a form of advertising and aimed to determine the roles thereof on changing consumer buying behaviour.

The phenomenon of subliminal advertising originated in 1957 when James Vicary published a study based on the effect of the words 'Drink Coke' and 'Eat Popcorn' inserted into cinema previews, just long enough for it to be recognised by the subconscious mind, but too short for the viewer to be consciously aware of it (Sofi, Nika, Shah and Zarger 2018:2). This attempt claimed to have an 18.1 per cent increase in Coke sales and a 57.8% increase in popcorn sales (Sofi, *et al.* 2018:2). These results turned out to be a hoax however, since then the phenomenon of placing subliminal messages in advertisements has been investigated and implemented by many researchers and companies (in their marketing material). This study further investigated the role of subliminal messages in changing consumer buying behaviour, with specific reference to print advertisements.

Current studies show many controversies regarding the effectiveness and use of subliminal messages in advertisements. This is due to the contrast in the findings of different studies as many studies show evidence to support the phenomenon of using subliminal messages in changing consumer buying behaviour while others show that there is no reliable evidence regarding the effectiveness thereof whatsoever (Atrees 2015:23; Sofi and Nika 2013:18; Suresh and Tandon 2018:23). According to Ruch,

Züst, and Henke (2016:5), subliminal messages in advertisements plays a vital role in consumer buying behaviour as it has long lasting effects on the subliminal perception of the consumer. Elgendi, Kumar, Barbic, Howard, Abbott and Cichocki (2018:13) agrees with this finding but states that in order for subliminal priming to play a role in consumer decision making, it has to be directly related to a specific goal. For the purpose of this study, the researcher aimed to provide evidence that subliminal messages play a role in convincing consumers to make certain purchase decisions. Subliminal messages are used by many companies when advertising products and services (Sabir and Mehmood 2016:1), therefore the uses thereof must add value to the company in some way.

Goal related subliminal advertisements is advertisements that has subliminal messages inserted into the advertisement with a specific goal in mind (Takarada, and Nozaki 2018:2). This goal can for example be to increase sales by 5% over a period of six months or to increase brand awareness. Légal, Chappé, Coiffard, and Villard-Forest (2012:1) found that having a specific goal in mind when developing subliminal stimuli, enhances the persuasiveness of a message in a more direct way. Smith and McCulloch (2012:555) agrees that having a specific goal will result in a greater likelihood of the subliminal priming being effective. For the purpose of this study, the researcher focused on the roles of subliminal messages in advertisements on changing consumer buying behaviour. The researcher cannot determine what the goal behind the advertisement were; therefore, the researcher was able to prove this literature in this research study.

Studies have investigated many different types of subliminal advertisements, including visual, audio or a combination of both (Sofi, *et al.* 2018:4). Visual subliminal messages are designed to bypass the conscious mind and send messages directly to the subconscious mind, by being shown so quickly that the consumer cannot recognise it with his conscious mind (Karam, Haidar, Khawaja and Al Laziki 2017:266). According to Atrees (2015:24) visual subliminal stimuli has a positive effect on a person's beliefs and consequent behaviour. They are most effective when the words or images used is familiar to the consumer or if it revokes an emotional response. Auditory subliminal messages are hidden messages in music or other audio stimuli, the messages can be hidden behind music by being played backwards, by containing high frequencies

(above 15kHz) or by being played much faster than they were originally recorded (Ghasemzadeh, Khass and Arjmandi 2016:4). These methods ensure that the audio messages reach the subconscious mind of the consumer. As this is a study regarding the role of subliminal messages with focus on print advertisement, the researcher focused only on the visual subliminal element.

Atrees (2015:24) investigates subliminal messages by differentiating between static and dynamic visual subliminal messages. Dynamic visual subliminal messages are short text messages that is flashed on a screen at regular intervals (Atrees 2015:24). These text images appear only for a fraction of a second, making it impossible for the viewer to consciously perceive it. Static visual subliminal messages are inserted into an unchanging viewable image like print advertisements. These messages are masked or hidden by other visual elements which makes it difficult, but not impossible for the viewer to consciously identify them (Freyman, Morse-Fortier, and Griffin 2015:1424). Static visual subliminal messages were used in conducting this study as print advertisements is unchangeable once printed; therefore, any subliminal messages inserted into the advertisement were static.

Research shows that the most common types of advertising appeals used consciously and subconsciously in advertisements is sexual images, images containing an emotional connotation and celebrity endorsement (Atrees 2015:24; Suresh *et al.* 2018:26; Sofi *et al.* 2013:17):

The use of sexual stimuli in advertisements is increasing, this confirms the saying 'sex sells' (Sabrina, Tedeschi and Cristina 2018:139). This occurs when sexually explicit images are combined with other advertising content in order to stimulate attention, interest and the emotions of consumers to induce them to purchase the product (Sabrina *et al.* 2018:140). Subliminal sexual stimuli are sexual cues in advertisements that is unconsciously processed by the viewer (Gillath and Collins 2016:8). According to Samson (2016:2), sexual cues is an effective way to gain the consumer's attention to a product. Kumar (2017:27) disagrees with this view as he states that advertisements containing sexual stimuli limits the consumers attention to only the sexual cues, and fails to create brand or product recognition. This study aimed to add

to the body of knowledge by discussing the role of sexual stimuli in advertisements in changing consumer buying behaviour.

Emotional appeal can be defined as the stimulation of consumer purchase intention by adding positive or negative emotional stimulation into advertisements (Sadeghi, Fakharyan, Dadkhah, Khodadadian, Vosta and Jafari 2015:235). Different appeals are used in advertisements which arouse the viewer's emotions, leading them to a purchase intention for a product (Sadeghi *et al.* 2015:235). Hamelin, El Moujahid and Thaichon (2017:104) found that emotion has an impact in the response a person will have toward a message as it increases attention toward the advertisement and product, it boosts attractiveness and generates a high level of recall.

Antonetti, Baines and Walker (2015:956) suggests that marketers should focus on using positive emotional cues, as negative cues can cause consumers to have a negative association with the brand. They agree that emotional messages have a significant impact on consumer buying behaviour. This study focused on the use of emotional subliminal messages as the advertisement used as stimuli contained elements of emotional subliminal messages. This enabled the researcher to determine the roles of emotional subliminal messages inserted into advertisements.

Companies have realized for some time now that celebrities can enhance the awareness, liking, and credibility of advertisements, as well as affect consumer purchase behaviour (Muda, Musa and Putit 2017:22). Celebrities have many followers and maintains a certain image, which can be a powerful tool to use in advertisements as they have a huge potential to influence people. According to a study conducted by Dom, Binti Ramli, Chin and Fern (2016:8478) people has positive feelings towards celebrity endorsers if they are relevant to the product, and have a positive image. The fit of the celebrity with the product is a key factor in the effectiveness thereof. Knoll and Matthes (2017:55) disagrees with the statement that celebrity endorsers is effective because they found in their study that celebrity endorsement has no effect on consumer buying behaviour. For the purpose of this study, the researcher did not focus extensively on celebrity endorsement as this is not a subliminal advertisement method.

The ethical nature of subliminal advertisements is being questioned in most literature on the topic (Sofi *et al.* 2018:2). According to Chattopadhyay *et al.* (2018:13), inserting subliminal messages into advertisements is in conflict with the sound principles of business ethics. People are being manipulated by subliminal advertisements to buy products that they don't really need by being led to believe that they do (Suresh *et al.* 2018:23). Stanton, Sinnott-Armstrong and Huettel (2017:801) found that some people are even willing to pay more for a product that does not do much good. This may be controversial to some companies' code of ethics as this is not an honest act and people are being misled by advertisements. However, many companies' still make use of subliminal messages in their advertisements as this is said to improve sales and awareness (Lemanski 2018:23). For the purpose of this study the researcher questioned the ethical nature of subliminal advertising, regardless of the effectiveness thereof.

Section 3: Research Methodology

Critical realism as research paradigm

Critical realism originated out of frustration with positivism's narrow and non-humanistic focus (du Plooy, Davis and Bezuidenhout 2014:31). In order to provide a comprehensive ontology and epistemology, components of both positivism and interpretivism approaches are combined (Fletcher 2017:4). Using critical realism as research paradigm in conducting this study, assisted the researcher in framing an approach in conducting research and offer suggestions for addressing it given certain beliefs about the world (Shannon-Baker 2016:321). For the purpose of this study, critical realism was be applied in terms of its ontological, epistemological and axiological perspectives.

The study was conducted using a mixed methodology; therefore, the critical realism paradigm was adopted. The purpose of using a mixed method approach was to gain a more complex and in-depth understanding of a phenomenon. This would not have been accessible by making use of only one approach (Shannon-Baker 2016:321; Cochran-Smith, Ell, Grudnoff, Ludlow, Haigh, and Hill 2014:106). In mixed methods, the research conducted is complementarity as both qualitative and quantitative methods have different strengths and limitations (Maxwell and Mittapalli 2010:147). By using them together the researcher was able to draw conclusions that would not have been possible by using only one method. This allowed the researcher to gain a thorough understanding of the role of subliminal messages in advertisements.

The ontology of critical realism states that there is a reality independent of any human knowledge or experience thereof (Chan 2015:284; Walsh and Evans 2014:e2). Three domains are identified within critical realism: the real, describing objects and structures with constitutional powers, which result in non-visible mechanisms; the actual, describing a subset of the real, including events from both used and unused mechanisms; and the empirical, describing observably, experienced events (Zachariadis, Scott, and Barrett 2013:3; Walsh and Evans 2014;e2). This leads us to an understanding that even though there is only one reality, researchers do not

necessarily have immediate access to it and may not be able to observe it in every aspect (Zachariadis *et al.* 2013:3).

According to Chan (2015:283) objects and events needs to be critically considered by researchers. Understanding the capabilities of objects and the conditions that provoke mechanisms to operate and produce events is an important aspect of critical realism (de Souza 2014:6).

The epistemological position of critical realism states that knowledge is not perceived by critical realist as permanent, but as something that should be considered within social and historical context (Scott 2014:29). According to du Plooy *et al.* (2014:32) the knowledge that the researcher produces will always be clouded by the values of the researcher; therefore, everything that is presented as knowledge should be questioned. It is believed by critical realists that they would never be able to provide permanent answers to problems (du Plooy *et al.* 2014:32). All knowledge that is generated should have a practical value and allow people to gain insight into a certain matter (Chan 2015:286). This study is of practical value and allows individuals to develop an understanding of the role of subliminal advertisements, as well as the implementation and use thereof, although the knowledge is subject to change and might not be permanent.

The axiological position of critical realism supports the idea that it is almost impossible to conduct value-free research and it accepts that there is a degree of subjectivism when conducting research (du Plooy *et al.* 2014:33; Heeks and Wall 2018:4). Critical realists therefore accept their own bias. The researcher believes that this is a study that adds value to the body of knowledge.

Research Design

A cross sectional, descriptive study on the role of subliminal messages on consumer buying behaviour was conducted by making use of a mixed methods approach. Creswell and Creswell (2017:184) is of meaning that any bias inherent in a single method can be neutralized or cancelled by the biases of other methods, as all methods have limitations. The mixed method approach integrated and compared qualitative and quantitative research in order to gain a deeper understanding of the role of subliminal messages in advertisements. This allowed the researcher to come to a more credible and accurate conclusion.

Qualitative methods were beneficial to utilize in conducting this study, as it can be used to uncover salient issues that can be studied at a later stage, by making use of more structured methods (Tracy, 2019:5). Qualitative research allowed the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of the roles of subliminal messages in advertisements (Lune and Berg, 2016:16). Some disadvantages of qualitative methods are that the data interpretation and analysis can be more complex and time consuming (Rahman, 2017:105). Researcher bias was likely to be involved in analysing the data (Almalki, 2016:290).

Moreover, quantitative data provided the researcher with a large amount of data to be analysed, and allowed the researcher to come to accurate conclusions and findings (McCusker and Gunaydin, 2015:4). Quantitative data may require more specialised equipment and knowledge to analyse and interpret (Almalki, 2016:6); therefore, the researcher sustained the quantitative data with qualitative data in conducting this research study.

The use of a mixed methods approach in conducting this study was relevant as Malina, Nørreklit and Selto (2011:64) states that a mixed methods approach allows the researcher to create a stronger outcome than any individual method would allow. Mixed methods enabled the researcher to explore complex aspects and relations of the human and social world (Shannon-Baker, 2016:324). The researcher was therefore able to conduct research on the roles of subliminal messages in advertisements, and provide stronger findings than what would have been possible by

making use of only one method. Quantitative and qualitative methods was used concurrently in conducting this study, due to the time frame of this study being cross-sectional.

The research tools that was utilized in conducting this study is online surveys as a quantitative method and in-depth interviews as a qualitative method.

Population

The target population of a research study is defined as the entire population that a researcher is interested in investigating (Asiamah, Mensah and Oteng-Abayie, 2017:1612). The accessible population is the population to which the researcher has access to and to whom the researcher can apply the conclusions (Asiamah *et al*, 2017:1613). In conducting this study, the researcher determined a population of people to participate in this study, as well as a population of advertisements which was used in order to conduct research.

The target population in terms of respondents was young South-African consumers, between the ages of 18 and 35 years old. The target population consisted of both male and female individuals. The accessible population from which respondents were selected for this study is individuals between the ages of 18 and 35 years old who is based in Pretoria, Gauteng. Pretoria is selected due to the close proximity and easy accessibility for the researcher.

Characteristics of the respondent population:

- Between the age of 18 and 35 years old.
- Male or female.
- South African Residents.
- Individuals of any race group races.
- Fluent in English.

The target population in terms of selecting advertisements to use in conducting this study, is all South African advertisements containing subliminal messages in any form. The accessible population from which advertisements was chosen, is static, print

advertisement containing subliminal messages in the form of emotional and sex appeal.

Characteristics of the advertisement population:

- Advertisement must contain subliminal message in some form.
- Advertisement must be relatable to the South African context.
- Advertisement must be static.

Sampling

This is a cross sectional study; therefore, limited time was available to conduct this study. The researcher was constrained by budget resources; therefore, for the purpose of this study a small sample of respondents was selected, in order to make a conclusion about the entire population.

Convenience sampling was utilized as a method of non-probability sampling in order to select respondents to participate in the study. Convenience sampling is a method where the subjects are chosen because of their close proximity to the researcher (Etikan, 2016:2). They are therefore readily and easily available and easily accessible to the researcher. Convenience sampling is a preferred sampling method among students as it is inexpensive and easy, compared to other sampling methods (Taherdoost, 2016:19). The researcher chose respondents that was easily accessible and close to the researcher in geographical area.

Some weaknesses of convenience sampling are firstly that the respondents chosen may not be the most reliable subjects; secondly, researcher bias is involved when selecting respondents and thirdly, the sample may not be completely representative of the larger population (Rahi, 2017:3). Due to the time and budget constraints of this study, the researcher made use of convenience sampling despite the weaknesses thereof.

The unit of analysis in conducting research is the 'who' or 'what' for which data is measured or collected (Sedgwick, 2014:1). For the purpose of this study the units of analysis were the advertisement containing subliminal messages being used as stimuli

when conducting the surveys and interviews. The reaction of respondents towards the subliminal messages within the advertisement was observed and analysed.

For the purpose of this study, quantitative research (online surveys) was conducted on 20 respondents and qualitative research (in-depth interviews) on 3 respondents. As previously stated, this is a cross-sectional study; therefore, due to the time constraint the sample size is small. The qualitative sample is smaller than the quantitative sample as the researcher needed to maintain the depth of the interviews and still be able to come to a conclusion within the time available to conduct this study. The researcher believes that this sample size was big enough for the research to be effectively conducted and for a conclusion to the roles of subliminal messages in advertisements to be drawn.

Sampling process:

The target population and accessible population was defined (as defined above). Thereafter, the sample size was determined - 20 respondents to participate in surveys and 3 respondents to participate in interviews. The sample was selected by using non-probability convenience sampling (Etikan, 2016). This was done by approaching people within the accessible population. People who were willing and agreed to participate in this study was used as representatives. The researcher ensured that the respondent was eligible to participate in this study, by asking relevant demographic questions.

Data collection methods

The research design that was utilized in conducting this study is semi structured in-depth interviews with open-ended questions (qualitative), and online surveys using a Likert scale and closed ended questions (quantitative). The surveys and interviews were based on three variables namely emotions, attitude towards the advertisements and purchase intentions (Wilfong, 2002:21).

Surveys is a valuable data collection method that consists of a series of questions that is carefully designed in order to gather information about a relatively large group of

people (du Plooy et al 2014:242). The researcher developed a survey related to the roles of subliminal messages in advertisements in order to conduct research that addressed the research questions and research problem of this study.

Interviews has been an essential research method in qualitative research for many decades (Dowling, Lloyd and Suchet-Pearson, 2016:678). An in-depth-interview is a conversation between the respondent and the researcher where the researcher asks the respondent a set of questions related to a research problem (Malterud, Siersma, and Guassora, 2016:3). The researcher developed a set of questions in order to guide the interview and address the research problem.

A stimulus consisting of two advertisements containing different subliminal messages was shown to respondents before answering a set of questions in order to determine whether the subliminal messages is effective in changing their buying behaviour. The same stimuli were utilized for both quantitative and qualitative methods. The aim of the surveys was to determine whether the subliminal messages plays a role changing the consumer's perceptions and purchase decisions, and the interviews was utilized to understand why and how the messages impacts the consumer's decisions.

The stimulus that was shown to respondents was static, printed advertisements. These advertisements contained a subliminal message in some form. There were two different advertisements utilized in conducting this study, one containing a subliminal message by means of an emotional appeal and the other containing a subliminal message by means of sex appeal.

The advertisements were chosen based on the following set of criteria:

1. The advertisement is a static advertisement.
2. The advertisement contains a subliminal message in some form (a sexual subliminal message for the advertisement used to measure the sex appeal and an emotional subliminal message for the advertisement used to measure the emotional appeal).
3. The advertisement is related to the South African market.

Advertisement 1 – Emotional Appeal:

Figure 1 (Appendix D) is a Johnnie Walker advertisement that aims to encourage viewers to stop drinking. The glass only contains ice, but no alcohol. The copy reads: “The road to success is paved with rocks. Let us smooth them out for you”. This advertisement is goal related and promises that it will help the consumer overcome ‘rocks’ or obstacles that the consumer might be facing when attempting to stop drinking (Kerouac, 2019). There is a subliminal picture hidden in each of the ice cubes, these pictures are aimed at targeting the consumers subliminal mind in order to affect their emotions towards the advertisement and the brand (Kerouac, 2019).

Figure 2 (Appendix D) shows the first subliminal message that is hidden within this advertisement. The ice cube contains an image of a monster. This image aims to provoke fear within the viewer in order to prompt them to feel that they need the brand to help them.

Figure 3 (Appendix D) shows the second subliminal message that is hidden within this advertisement, the Ace of Spades. The Ace of Spades has been interpreted as the symbol of death, misfortune and personal loss (Carabott, 2018). This image is used in order to provoke fear in the minds of viewers.

Figure 4 (Appendix D) shows the third subliminal message hidden in this advertisement, an image of a screaming man that appears within an ice cube. Other images reported to be seen within this advertisement is a ghost, vampire, ghastly face, a witch doctor, bird head, alien and a skull (Kerouac, 2019).

Advertisement 2 – Sex Appeal:

In advertisement 2, seen in figure 5 (Appendix D) there are several messages being communicated, both consciously and subliminally. The copy that reads “D_CK” makes a sexual suggestion by implying the word ‘dick’. The letters D and C with the underscore (D_C) can be subliminally or even consciously interpreted as a face.

The respondent answered a set of questions from an online survey (see appendix E) after viewing each advertisement, in order for the researcher to determine whether the subliminal message plays a role in the consumer decision making process. After the

quantitative survey was completed, the researcher conducted a semi structured in-depth-interview (see appendix F), in order to gain a deeper understanding of the respondents' thoughts and decisions towards the brand.

The researcher made use of an online survey, set up by using google forms, as well as an interview guide that led the researcher in conducting interviews with respondents, as research instruments. A cell phone was utilized as research instrument in order to voice record all of the interviews. A consent form was also utilized as research instrument in conducting this study. Surveys was completed online, therefore respondents could complete it at any location and any time. The researcher scheduled appointments with respondents in order to conduct interviews.

Qualitative data collection (interview) process:

An in-depth interview guide was structured by using sources and content from the literature review of this study. All questions were set up in order to address the research problem of this study. The interview was tested by making use of test-retest. The interview guide was approved by the IIE before interviews were conducted.

After receiving approval from the IE, respondents were selected from the sample and asked to participate in the study. A date and time were set for the interview to be conducted. When conducting the interview, the participant was provided with all relevant information and he/she was asked to fill out a consent form wherein he/she agreed to the terms of the study (Qu and Dumay, 2011).

Furthermore, questions were asked to the respondent as set out in the interview guide (Appendix F). All questions and answers were voice recorded with a cellophane in order to transcribe and refer back to at a later stage. After the interview was conducted, the researcher transcribed the interview.

After all interviews was conducted, the data was analysed by making use of a thematic content analysis. Findings was compared to the findings obtained from quantitative surveys (Qu, *et al*, 2011). All findings as to the role of subliminal messages in changing consumer buying behaviour was delivered.

Quantitative data collection (online surveys) process:

Survey questions were structured within google forms by using sources and content from the literature review of this study. All questions were set up in order to address the research problem of this study. Respondents was selected from the sample and asked to participate in the survey.

After respondents were selected, each participant was provided with all relevant information related to the study. The digital link to the online survey was sent to respondents. The respondents agreed to the terms of the study and gave consent by clicking on the 'next' button on the first screen of the survey. Thereafter, respondents completed the survey at their own time, without meeting with the researcher.

All data obtained from the surveys was automatically put into a excel spreadsheet and graphs was drawn up through google forms. Data was analysed by making use of the automatic function on google forms where data was automatically converted into an excel spreadsheet and graphs.

Findings were compared to the findings obtained from the in-depth interviews. All findings as to the role of subliminal messages in changing consumer buying behaviour was delivered.

Data analysis methods

The first analysis that took place in conducting this study was analysing the advertisements through means of observation. The advertisements were analysed to ensure that they meet the criteria as set out in the data collection methods section of this study.

Two data analysis methods were utilized in analysing the data obtained from respondents, one method for qualitative data collected and one for quantitative data collected. Data obtained from interviews was analysed by making use of thematic content analysis. Data obtained from survey responses was analysed by making use

of the automatic function on google forms. The researcher transcribed all interviews before starting the data analysis thereof (Appendix I).

Thematic content analysis:

After all interviews were transcribed, the researcher reviewed the transcripts and followed the following steps in order to analyse the data:

The researcher got familiar with the data by reading and re-reading the transcripts. Themes were identified and all text was coded with different colours representing different themes. After coding the data, the researcher searched for themes with a broader pattern or meaning. Themes were selected and reviewed to ensure that they are relevant to the research problem, determining the roles of subliminal messages in print advertisements. Themes was named and defined; thereafter, a table was drawn up to present themes, this includes quotes from the interviews. Findings was derived in the form of a report in order to answer the research questions of this study.

Google forms:

All of the findings obtained from the surveys was automatically summarised into a excel spreadsheet and graphs and charts were automatically set up by the online software. All data was presented in the form of numeric data and percentages. The researcher viewed the findings and compared data in order to come to a conclusion and present findings.

Section 4: Findings and discussion

Findings from quantitative research

After conducting quantitative research by means of online surveys, responses from 22 respondents were obtained. Two respondents did not meet the required criteria in order to be eligible to participate in this study; therefore, findings were derived from the responses of 20 respondents.

Finding 1:

In order to determine whether subliminal messages in advertisements plays any role in changing consumer perceptions and buying behaviour, respondents were asked what their perceptions and purchase intentions are towards the brand, before and after viewing the advertisement. The same process was followed with the Clear Soap advertisement. The results are captured in the following graphs:

Advertisement 1 (Johnny Walker):

What is your current perception of the Johnny Walker brand (before viewing the advertisement)?

20 responses

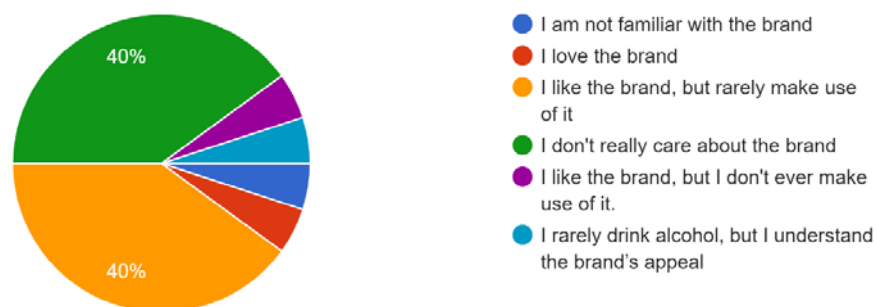


Figure 6: Perception of the brand before viewing the advertisement.

How likely are you to make use of the Johnny Walker brand (before viewing the advertisement)?

20 responses

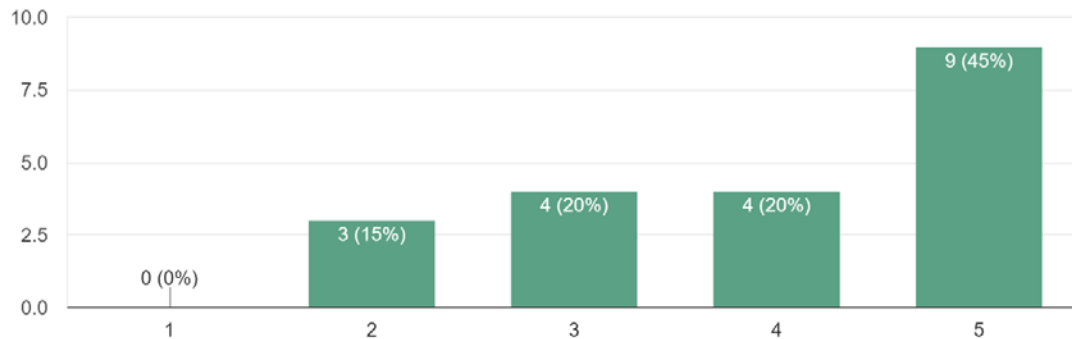


Figure 7: Likeliness to use brand before viewing the advertisement. 1 being highly likely and 5 being not likely at all.

What is your current perception of the Johnny Walker brand (after viewing the advertisement)?

20 responses

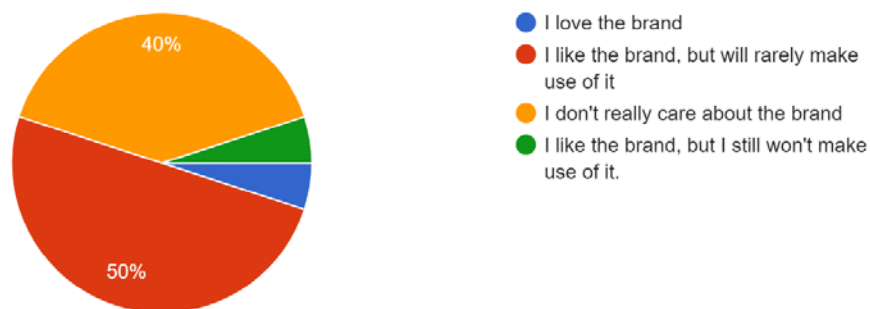


Figure 8: Perception of the brand after viewing the advertisement.

How likely are you to make use of the Johnny Walker brand (after viewing the advertisement)?

20 responses

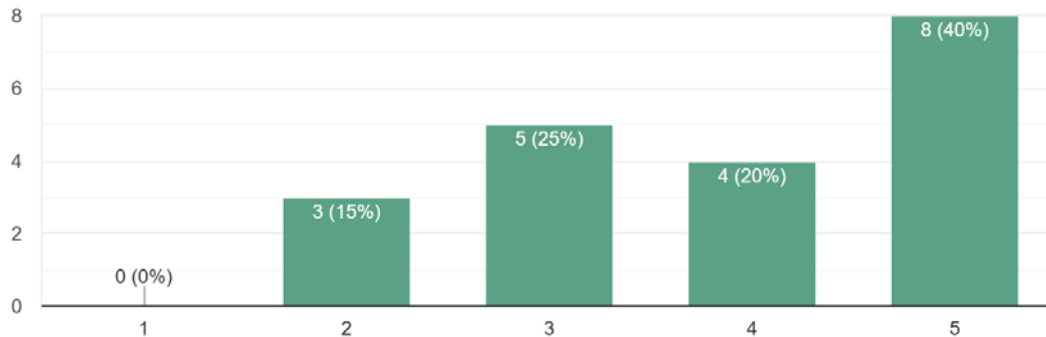


Figure 9: Likeliness to make use of the brand after viewing the advertisement. 1 being highly likely and 5 being not likely at all.

After studying this finding from advertisement 1, the Johnny Walker brand, the researcher came to the conclusion that an advertisement containing subliminal messages by means of an emotional appeal does not play a prominent role in changing consumer buying behaviour. Before viewing the advertisement, 40% of the respondents said that they like the brand but won't use it, and 40% of respondents said that they don't really care about the brand. 65% of the respondents said that they are highly unlikely to make use of the brand (scoring 4-5 on the Likert scale). After viewing the advertisement there weren't any significant changes in these numbers as 50% of respondents said they like the brand but won't use it, 40% of respondents still don't care about the brand and 60% of respondents are highly unlikely to make use of the brand.

This finding contradicts the finding that subliminal messages has long lasting effects on the subliminal perception of the consumer, by Ruch *et al* (2016:5) as it is evident that there was no significant change in consumers perceptions and purchase intentions towards the brand. Hamelin *et al* (2017:104) found that an emotional appeal in advertisements impacts the response a person will have towards a message. This finding disproves the statement of Hamelin (2017) as there was no significant change in the consumer's response towards Johnny Walker after viewing the advertisement.

Advertisement 2 (Clear Soap):

What is your current perception of the Clear soap brand (before viewing the advertisement)?

20 responses

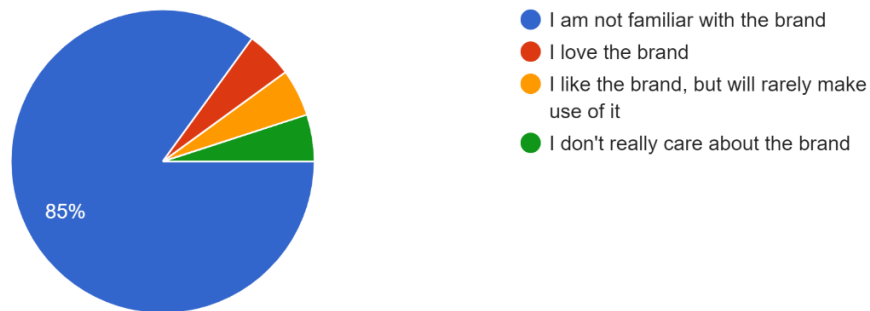


Figure 10: Perception of the brand before viewing the advertisement.

How likely are you to make use of the Clear soap brand (before viewing the advertisement)?

20 responses

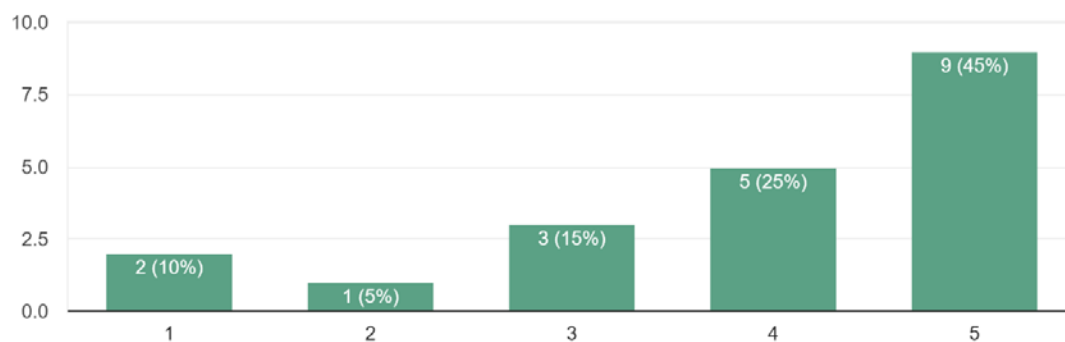


Figure 11: Likeliness to make use of the brand before viewing the advertisement. 1 being highly likely and 5 being not likely at all.

What is your current perception of the Clear soap brand (after viewing the advertisement)?

20 responses

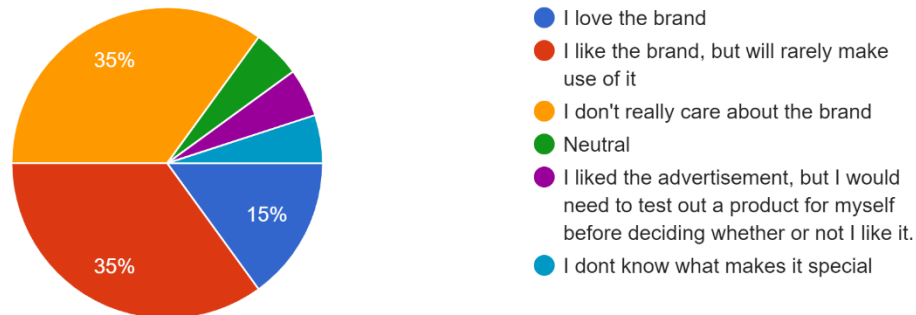


Figure 12: Perception of the brand after viewing the advertisement.

How likely are you to make use of the Clear soap brand (after viewing the advertisement)?

20 responses

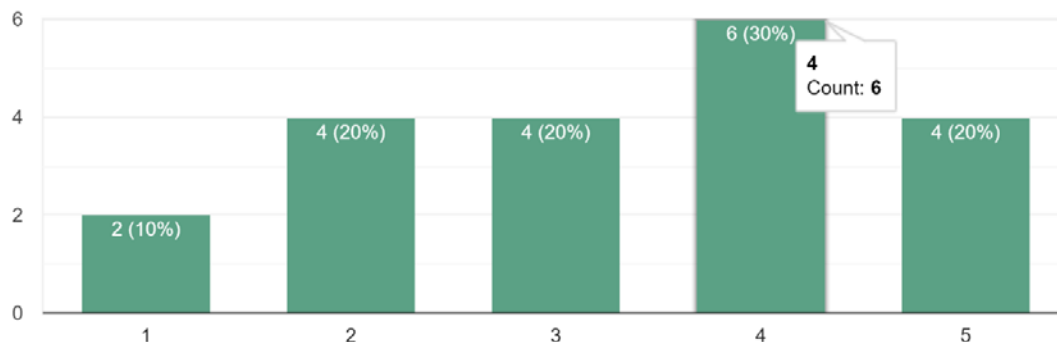


Figure13: Likeliness to make use of the brand after viewing the advertisement. 1 being highly likely and 5 being not likely at all.

The findings from the Clear soap advertisement is slightly different from those of the Johnny Walker advertisement. This advertisement contained a sex appeal and seemed to grab the attention of the viewers. Before viewing the advertisement 85% of respondents was unfamiliar with the brand and 70% of respondents were unlikely to make use of the brand (scoring 4-5 on the Likert scale). After being exposed to the advertisement, these numbers changed significantly. 35% of respondents do not care about the brand, 35% of respondents said to like the brand but they will not make use of it and only 15% of respondents said that they love the brand. Interestingly, 30% of

respondents said that they would make use of the brand after viewing the advertisement (scoring 1-2 on the Likert scale) and the percentage of people who would not make use of the brand decreased to 50%.

This finding supports the literature by Signoretti (2017) as it proves that subliminal messages in an advertisement plays a role in changing consumer perceptions and buying behaviour as the respondents' purchase intentions increased by 15%. Samson (2016:2) stated that sexual cues is an effective way to gain the consumer's attention to the product, while Kumar (2017:27) disagrees by saying that it only draws the consumers attention to the sexual element and not to the product. This finding proves the finding of Samson (2016) as there is a significant change in consumer perceptions towards the brand, as well as their purchase intentions after viewing the advertisement.

Finding 2:

In order to determine whether subliminal messages in advertisements plays any role in influencing the emotions of consumers and their emotional connection towards the brand, the respondents were asked about their emotions being provoked by the advertisement. The findings are as follows:

Advertisement 1 (Johnny Walker):

Does this advertisement have an emotional impact on you?

20 responses

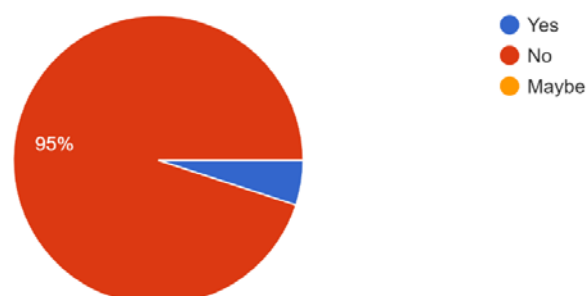


Figure 14: Emotional impact of advertisement.

How does the advertisement make you feel?

20 responses

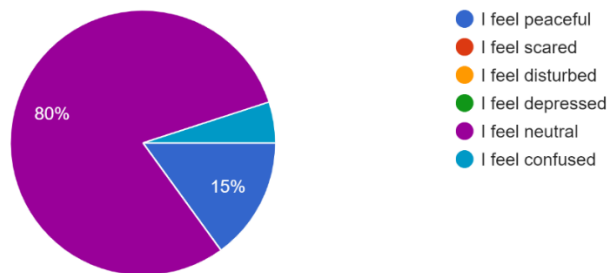


Figure 15: Feelings provoked by advertisement.

After being asked whether the respondent experience any emotion after viewing the Johnny Walker advertisement, it is evident that 95% of respondents did not experience any emotion. 80% of respondents are neutral towards the advertisement and no emotion was provoked.

Sadeghi *et al* (2015:235) is of meaning that appeals used to arouse the viewer's emotions will lead them to having a purchase intention towards the brand. Although the subliminal messages that is hidden in the ice cubes in this advertisement were elements containing an emotional appeal, the advertisement did not provoke any emotions within respondents. This finding disproves the statement of Sadeghi *et al* (2015).

Advertisement 2 (Clear Soap):

Does this advertisement have an emotional impact on you?

20 responses

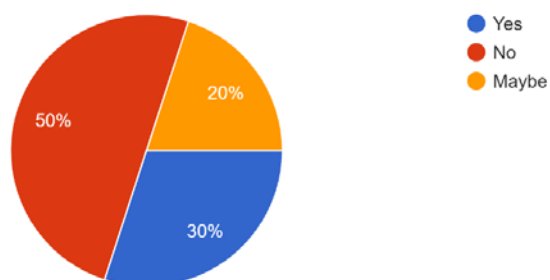


Figure 16: Emotional impact of advertisement.

How does the advertisement make you feel?

20 responses

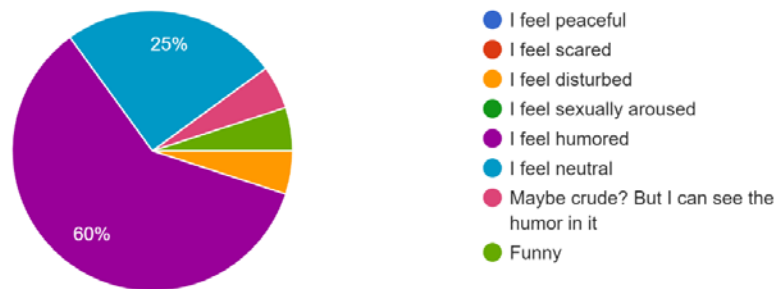


Figure 17: Emotion provoked by advertisement.

It is evident through this finding that 60% of respondents were humoured by this advertisement. The aim of this advertisement was not necessarily focused on humour, but rather on a sex appeal; however, the humour had a positive effect on the perceptions and purchase intentions of the consumers. This finding proves the finding from the literature of Atrees (2015), visual subliminal stimuli have a positive effect on a persons' behaviour and that it is most effective when the words or images used revokes an emotional response, as the emotion of being humoured had a significant effect on consumer purchase intentions.

Finding 3:

Respondents were asked if they are aware subliminal advertising. A simple definition of the term was provided to ensure that respondents understand what it means. In order to determine whether subliminal advertising plays any role in changing consumer behaviour, respondents answered questions related to subliminal advertising. The results are presented in the following graphs:

Have you ever heard of the term 'subliminal advertising'?

20 responses

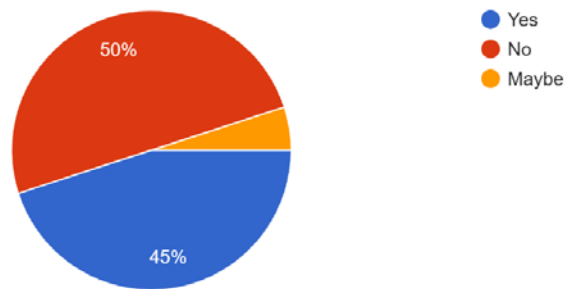


Figure 18: Awareness of subliminal advertising.

Do you believe that the mind can interpret subliminal messages (hidden messages) in advertisements without a person being consciously aware of it?

20 responses

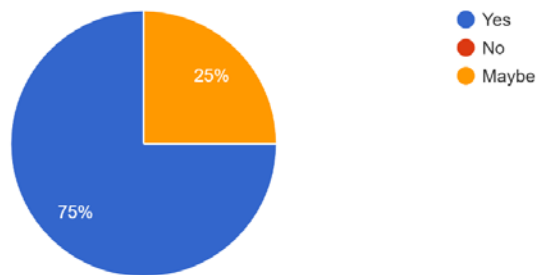


Figure 19: Interpretation of subliminal messages.

How effective do you believe subliminal advertisements are in persuading consumers to buy certain products?

20 responses

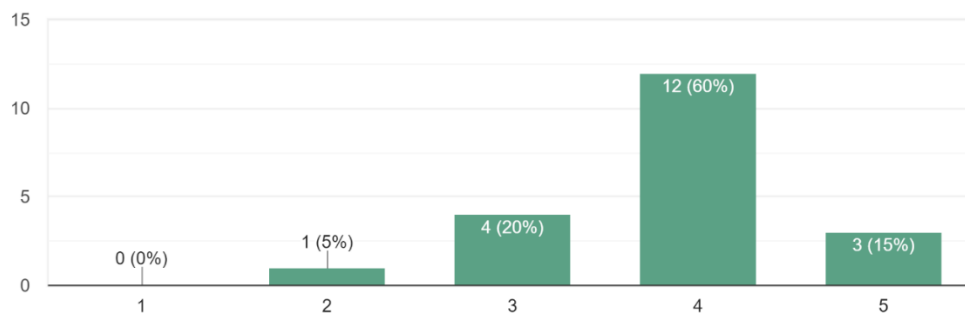


Figure 10: Effectiveness of subliminal advertising. 1 being not effective and 5 being highly effective.

Do you think it is possible that subliminal messages can influence you to do things you normally would not do?

20 responses

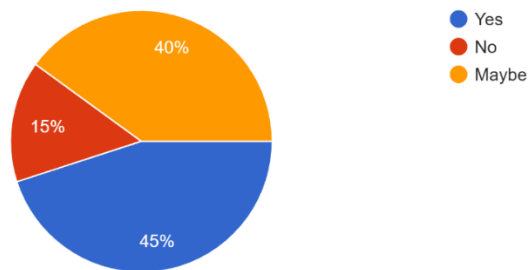


Figure 11: Influence of subliminal advertising.

45% of respondents are aware of subliminal advertising. 75% of respondents are of meaning that subliminal messages within advertisements can be interpreted by a persons' subconscious mind. This proves the literature by Mladenovic *et al* (2016) as they are of meaning that subliminal messages can be interpreted by a person without the person being aware thereof.

75% of respondents are of meaning that subliminal messages are highly effective in persuading consumers to buy a certain product (scoring 4-5 on the Likert scale). This finding proves the literature by Karam *et al* (2017) as they are of meaning that subliminal messages can enter into a person's mind without him being aware thereof and persuade people to make use of a certain product or brand.

When the respondents were asked about the ability of subliminal messages to influence their behaviour, 45% of respondents said that subliminal messages are able to influence people to do things they would not normally do, while only 15% disagreed. This finding supports the literature by Atrees (2015), who are of meaning that subliminal messages has an impact on a person's beliefs.

Finding 4:

In order to address the research question regarding the ethical nature of subliminal advertising, respondents were asked whether they are of meaning that it is ethically

correct to make use of subliminal messages in advertisements. The results are as follows:

Do you think it is ethically correct for brands to make use of subliminal advertising?

20 responses

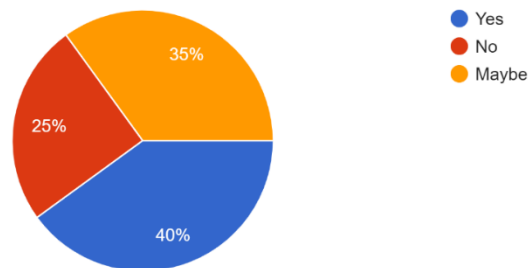


Figure 12: Ethical nature of subliminal advertisements.

40% of respondents are of meaning that it is ethically correct for brands to make use of subliminal advertising, in order to persuade people to make use of their brand. This finding supports the finding by Lemanshi (2018), that companies are allowed to make use of subliminal advertising to improve sales and awareness.

Only 25% of respondents disagrees by saying that it is wrong for brands to do so. This finding supports the literature by Chattopadhyay (2018:13), which states that inserting subliminal messages into advertisements are in conflict with the sound principles of business ethics.

Findings from qualitative research

After conducting qualitative research by means of in-depth interviews, responses from 3 interviewees were obtained. The findings are categorized in seven themes which is presented below:

Theme 1: Emotion provoked

This theme describes the emotion, if any, being provoked within the minds of the interviewees after being exposed to the advertisement. Respondents were asked how the advertisement makes them feel.

Theme 2: Reaction to the subliminal message

This theme describes the reaction that the interviewee had towards the subliminal message that is hidden within the advertisements. The researcher determined whether they noticed the subliminal message, by asking the interviewees to give their overall impression of the advertisement. If the respondent mentioned the subliminal element, even without being aware that there is a hidden message, the researcher made the conclusion that their subconscious mind did take notice of it.

Theme 3: Purchase intention

This theme entails the intention of the interviewees to make use of the product being advertised after being exposed to the advertisement.

Theme 4: Awareness of subliminal advertising

This theme describes the interviewee's awareness of subliminal advertising.

Theme 5: Role of subliminal messages

This theme entails the roles of subliminal messages and the ways in which they can be influential to change a person's purchase decisions.

Theme 6: Effectiveness of subliminal advertising

Theme 6 describes the interviewee's perception on the effectiveness of subliminal advertising in persuading consumers to make use of a brand.

Theme 7: Ethical nature

The ethical nature of subliminal advertising is observed by asking respondents whether they believe that it is ethically correct for brands to make use of subliminal messages in order to persuade consumers to make use of their brand.

The findings are presented in the table below and discussed thereafter.

Advertisement 1 (Johnny Walker):

Theme	Transcript quote	Code
Emotion provoked	"I'd say neutral because I think it's still a nice ad but it doesn't make me feel any type of way."	No emotion.

	"It does not make me feel any certain way." "Neutral."	No emotion. No emotion.
Reaction to the subliminal message	"Yah there's no picture of whiskey but I won't forget that it's Johnny walker." "I think the light reflecting off of the ice cubes and the glass is nice." "Well, the glass is full of ice which is quite ironic because they are not advertising ice, they are advertising Johnny Walker. I don't see any alcohol in the ad, I only see ice which is like overflown. The glass is full of ice which is interesting." "I think they wanted to go for the simplicity look, but it feels a bit dark."	Subliminal element. Subliminal element. Subliminal element.
Purchase intention	"I like the ad, it's quite classy so I would maybe re-gift it, like buy it as a gift for someone." "No." "No."	Would not buy for personal use. Would not buy. Would not buy.

Table 1: Advertisement 1 themes.

Advertisement 2 (Clear soap):

Theme	Transcript quote	Code
Emotion provoked	"No." "It's quite funny." I'm a bit shocked."	No emotion. Emotion. Emotion.

Reaction to the subliminal message within advertisement	"The bold black text."	Subliminal element.
	"It's suggestive."	Subliminal element.
	"I think it is clear that they were trying to play on something else."	Subliminal element.
Purchase intention	"No."	No impact.
	"I would use this product regardless of this advertisement."	No impact.
	"No."	No impact.

Table 2: Advertisement 2 Themes

Subliminal advertising effectiveness:

Awareness of subliminal advertising	"Yes".	Participant has an understanding of subliminal advertising.
	"I have heard about it."	
	"I'm not very familiar with the term."	Participant doesn't have an understanding of subliminal advertising.
Role of subliminal messages	"I think definitely they can influence you to have a certain, to change your perceptions about yourself, about life, about the products you use especially when a subliminal message is like stacked on top of each other."	Influential.

	"It makes us think something is real when it might not be. So, our perception of that gets skewed eventually, possibly." "I think if a company or a brand goes about using subliminal messages in a very effective way it would definitely help their product to sell." "I think probably it can influence you to be more susceptible towards the product. Or, being more scared if they use it in erm, alcohol ads or, not alcohol, arrive alive."	Influential. Influential. Influential.
Effectiveness of subliminal advertising	"I do think they are effective." "I do think it can be very impactful on the long term if done on a continual basis." "It's very persuasive but can be very effective." "I don't think it's very effective... it's difficult to determine whether it was the subliminal messaging or the content itself that did the work to persuade me"	Effective. Effective. Effective. Not effective.
Ethical nature	"I think it's not ethical for vulnerable groups... But I think for a normal adult, I mean this is advertising, that's how it is so". "I don't think it's a problem." "No."	Not ethical. Ethical. Ethical. Not ethical.

Table 3: Subliminal advertising effectiveness Themes

Theme 1 finding:

As for theme 1, emotion provoked, it is evident through the Johnny walker advertisement that no emotion was provoked within any of the respondents. The Clear soap advertisement; however, showed some emotional response as the respondents said they feel humoured or shocked. The advertisement containing an emotional appeal did not provoke any emotion, this finding disproves the literature of Atrees (2015) as no emotion was provoked. The advertisement containing sex appeal did however provoke some emotion which proves the literature of Samson (2016), as the sexual cue in the advertisement gained the attention and emotion of respondents.

The researcher has come to the conclusion that no significant emotions were provoked from the advertisements due to the subliminal messages.

Theme 2 finding:

All respondents noticed the subliminal element in the Johnny Walker advertisement (the ice cubes). They did not necessarily notice the faces within the ice cubes that are used to provoke emotion, but they did notice the light reflecting from the ice cubes and their attention were drawn to this. Respondents also noticed the subliminal element within the Clear soap advertisement as they all said that their attention were focused on the big bold text containing the element of sex appeal.

This finding agrees with the literature of Ruth *et al* (2016:5) as the subliminal element seems to play a role in grabbing the attention of the viewers. The fact that the respondents were focused on the big bold text in the Clear soap advertisement proves the statement by Kumar (2017:27) that advertisements containing sexual stimuli limits the viewers' attention to only the sexual cues and not the product. None of the respondents were focused on the Clear soap, but rather on the sexual cues.

From this finding it is clear that the subconscious minds of the consumers processed the subliminal elements although they were unaware of the hidden message within these elements.

Theme 3 finding:

None of the respondents showed any intention to purchase the products being advertised after viewing the advertisements. It is therefore evident that the subliminal messages within these advertisements, did not have any effect on the viewer's purchase intentions. This finding is in contrast with the findings from the literature of Ruth *et al* (2016) and Elgendi *et al* (2018) as they are of meaning that subliminal advertisements plays a significant role in changing consumer's buying behaviour.

Through this finding, the researcher derived that subliminal messages in advertisements plays no role in changing consumer buying behaviour.

Theme 4 finding:

66.6% of respondents are aware of subliminal advertising and had a thorough understanding of the term. All of the participants agreed that subliminal advertising is influential. Interviewee 1 was of meaning that subliminal messages can change your perceptions, Interviewee 2 said that it can help a company to sell its products and Interviewee 3 said that it can cause a person to be more susceptible towards a brand. This finding proves the statement from Ruch *et al* (2016), as they are of meaning that it has long lasting effects on consumer perception towards a brand. Therefore, it can be said that subliminal advertising plays a role in changing consumers' perceptions towards a brand.

Theme 5 and 6 finding:

2 respondents were of meaning that subliminal messages are effective in changing consumer buying behaviour, while one respondent disagreed as she said it is difficult to determine whether it was the subliminal message or the content itself that did the work to persuade a consumer. All of the respondents were of meaning that subliminal advertising is influential and that it can change a person's perception about a brand. This finding proves the literature of Signoretti (2017) as it is evident that the respondents believe that subliminal advertising is effective in changing consumer buying behaviour.

Theme 7 finding:

In terms of the ethical nature of subliminal advertising it was found that respondents perceive subliminal advertising as being ethically correct; however, they don't find it to be morally correct. Interviewee 1 said that it is not ethically correct for brands to make use of subliminal advertising to attract vulnerable groups, for e.g. small children, but she found no concern using it to persuade adults. This finding disproves the literature by Stanton *et al* (2017) and Lemanski (2018) as they are of meaning that it is not ethically correct to make use of subliminal advertising.

Interviewee 3 said that it is not ethically correct; however, by asking her why she felt this way it was clear that she had moral concerns and not ethical concerns. This proves the statement by Chattopadhyay (2018:13), regarding subliminal advertising being in conflict with the sound principles of business ethics.

The researcher has come to the conclusion that subliminal advertising is not a major ethical concern as the majority of respondents did not have a problem with making use of subliminal messages in advertisements.

Summary of findings

- Advertisements containing a subliminal message by means of emotional appeal does not play any role in changing consumer buying behaviour.
- Advertisements containing a subliminal message by means of sex appeal plays a role in changing consumers' purchase intentions, however, this only has a small impact.
- No emotions are provoked through advertisements containing subliminal messages by means of emotional appeal.
- Some emotions are provoked through advertisements containing subliminal messages by means of sex appeal.
- Subliminal advertising is effective in changing consumers' perceptions about a brand.
- Subliminal messages in advertisements plays no role in changing consumer buying behaviour.

- 55% of consumers are aware of the use of subliminal messages in advertisements.
- It is ethically correct to make use of subliminal messages in advertisements.

Validity, reliability and trustworthiness

In order for the research conducted during this research study to be trustworthy, the research should have a high degree of internal and external validity, as well as internal and external reliability (Heale and Twycross, 2015:66).

Internal validity refers to the internal control over variables (Heale *et al*, 2015:66). The researcher had control over the choice of stimuli used in conducting this study. No stimuli were manipulated and the results that they delivered is trustworthy. External validity refers to the extent to which results can be generalized to the larger population (Heale *et al*, 2015:66). With the use of non-probability sampling, the researcher was not able to make assumptions relevant to the entire population, which ultimately puts the validity of this study into question. The researcher does however believe that the roles of subliminal messages in advertisements is effectively determined, and that the findings is trustworthy despite the small sample size.

The reliability of a study refers to the extent the same instrument is used at different times and administered to different respondents and delivering the same results throughout (Noble and Smith, 2015:35). In order to ensure the internal reliability of this study, the questions that was asked in the survey and interview were derived from current literature. The questions that was asked is understandable and measurable. The external reliability refers to the degree to which a measure is stable over a period of time (Noble *et al*, 2015:35). In order to ensure the external reliability, test-retest were conducted. Test-retest is a method in which the researcher asks the same question twice, on different occasions (Noble *et al*, 2015:36). This method is used to ensure that the answers given is reliable.

Credibility is referred to as the accuracy to which the data obtained from respondents is interpreted (Connelly, 2016:435). The researcher made use of more than one data collection method (surveys and interviews). By using triangulation in conducting this research study, the credibility thereof was increased (Turner, Cardinal and Burton,

2017:245). The researcher believes that the data analysis method used in this study is most suitable for this study and that the results that were delivered are credible and trustworthy.

The transferability of a study refers to the ability of the findings to be applied to similar situations and deliver similar results (Connelly, 2016:436). The stimuli containing subliminal messages that is used in conducting this study can easily be replaced in order for a replica study to be conducted. The researcher is of belief that the findings delivered by another study similar to this one, will be the same.

The dependability of a study refers to the quality of the process and the integration that takes place between the data collection method, data analysis method and the theory that is generalised from the data (du Plooy *et al* 2013:259). As previously mentioned, two data collection methods were utilized in conducting this study (surveys and interviews). This ensures that integration takes place.

Confirmability refers to the extent to which the data collected support the findings and the interpretation of the data (Mandal, 2018:592). The researcher audio recorded and transcribed all interviews that took place in conducting this study. All completed surveys will be kept on record in order to be able to confirm all findings. This contributes to the trustworthiness of this research study.

Section 5: Conclusion

Research Question, Problem and Goals addressed

All research questions in this study is answered as follows:

Primary research question:

Subliminal messages in advertisements does not play any significant role in changing consumer buying behaviour. The two appeals studied in this research study, emotional appeal and sex appeal did not show any signs of impacting consumers to make a purchase decision towards the brand being advertised. Subliminal messages do however have an effect on the perceptions the consumers have towards the brand, but this does not influence their purchase intentions.

Secondary research questions:

Through the findings presented in section four of this study, it is evident that there is no relation between subliminal messages inserted into advertisements, and consumer buying behaviour in the short term. None of the respondents showed any intention to make use of the brands that was being advertised.

It was found that 55% of respondents was aware of subliminal advertising and had a thorough understanding of the term. Through this finding it is clear that the majority of young South African consumers are aware of subliminal advertising.

It is evident that young South African consumers perceive subliminal advertising as being ethically correct. There were some moral concerns raised regarding the use of subliminal advertising, but the majority of respondents had no problem regarding the ethical nature of subliminal advertising.

The research problem in this research study was addressed, as it was determined that subliminal advertising does not play any role in changing consumer buying behaviour. The literature gap was filled as this study focused on young South African consumers. An in-depth understanding of the roles of subliminal messages in advertisements was not obtained through this study as there were no significant roles found.

The research objectives for this study was reached as the researcher determined that subliminal messages in advertisements does not play a role in changing consumer buying behaviour. Subliminal advertising does not play a role in any way in changing consumer behaviour; however, it does instil a positive perception towards the brand in the minds of the consumers. The researcher determined that consumers are aware of the use of subliminal messages in advertisements, and that they perceive subliminal advertising as being ethically correct.

Scope for future research

This study is limited to 20 respondents from quantitative data and 3 respondents from qualitative data collection methods. Future studies can test this phenomenon on a larger group of respondents from the population. Future studies can use different advertisements or more advertisements in order to analyse the roles of subliminal messages in advertisements, by having access to a larger unit of analysis. Future studies can focus on different advertising appeals, as this study only focused on emotional and sex appeal. This was a cross sectional study; therefore, the long-term effectiveness and roles of subliminal messages in advertisements could not have been determined. Future researchers can study the long-term roles of subliminal advertisements.

Limitations to the study

There were two main factors that limits this research study namely time constraints and financial constraints. This was a cross-sectional study; therefore, limited time was available in order to conduct the study. This study was conducted for academic purposes; therefore, no budget was made available to the researcher in order for the study to be conducted. In order to address this limitation, the researcher conducted research on a smaller group of respondents and made use of the free software: google forms.

A small group of respondents was observed and analysed in conducting this study; therefore, a representation of the larger population may not have been possible. The researcher does however believe that the findings and conclusions are accurate and relevant. Finding respondents to participate in the study was a barrier; therefore, the

researcher allowed enough time to ensure that all participants, chosen were able participate in the study.

This was a cross sectional study, therefore the long-term impact of subliminal messages in advertisements could not have been studied. Findings presented is only relevant in terms of the short-term impact of subliminal messages.

There are many types of subliminal messages that can be used in advertisements (Atrees 2015:24; Suresh *et al.* 2018:26; Sofi *et al.* 2013:17). For the purpose of this study, the researcher only focused on emotional appeal and sex appeal. This is a limitation because the full spectrum of subliminal advertisements was not observed. The researcher believes that the study is still credible and reliable despite this limitation. The roles of subliminal messages in advertisements were still effectively determined.

Ethical considerations

Ethics in conducting research is of uttermost importance as it protects both the researcher and the respondents of a research study. The researcher ensured that all ethical considerations is addressed and adhered to in conducting this study.

Informed consent was obtained from all respondents, after they have been informed about the extent and purpose of the research being conducted (see Appendix G). The researcher ensured that the respondents are aware of, and understand their role in participating in this study. The researcher ensured that the respondents understood that their participation in this study was purely on a voluntary basis and that no incentive were to be given. All respondents were informed that they may withdraw from the study at any time.

A confidentiality agreement was made with all participants and the researcher ensured them that their identity will be kept anonymous. The freedom and privacy of all respondents was taken into consideration as all of their information was kept private.

All stimuli used in conducting this study is content that is made publicly available by the relevant brands; therefore, it was ethical to make use thereof. All research tools being used in conducting this study was relevant and respectful to all parties involved.

All research conducted during this study was conducted in adherence to the IIE research guidelines. The researcher ensured that all necessary documents was attached and that all consent was obtained from the necessary parties within the IIE. The researcher started conducting research after ethical clearance was provided by the relevant navigators and supervisors from the IIE (see Appendix B).

Conclusions

The aim of this study was to determine the role of subliminal messages inserted into advertisements on changing consumer buying behaviour. This study was successfully conducted as the researcher answered all research questions and reached all research objectives. By conducting this study, the researcher determined that subliminal messages in advertisements plays no role in changing consumer buying behaviour, this finding is different from what the researcher initially expected to find. This study is limited to two advertisements and two advertising appeals; therefore, the findings of a similar study may be different if the researcher uses different advertisements and appeals.

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Appendix A: Summary Table

Research Objective	Primary research Question	Research Rationale	Seminal Authors/ Sources	Literature Review	Paradigm	Approach	Data Collection method(s)	Ethics	Key Findings	Recommendations	
To determine whether subliminal messages in advertisements plays a role in changing consumer buying behaviour.	In what ways does the use of subliminal messages in advertisements play a role in changing consumer buying behaviour?	There are many controversies in current literature. The role of subliminal messages in advertisements is vague. Few studies have been conducted in the South-African context.	Sofi, S.A., Nika, F.A., Shah, M.S. and Zarger, A.S. (2018).	<u>Theme 1:</u> Subliminal advertising definition and origin. <u>Theme 2:</u> Controversies regarding subliminal advertising. <u>Theme 3:</u> Types of subliminal advertising. <u>Theme 4:</u> Ethical nature of subliminal advertising.	This is a mixed methodology study therefore the critical realism paradigm will be adopted. The epistemology of empowering people through knowledge will be implemented. The ontology of a changing reality will be adopted as reality is governed by underlying structures. Certain forms of reality exist independent of human interaction and awareness. There is no such thing as value free research.	Mixed method approach.	Data will be collected through interviews and online surveys. Advertisements containing subliminal messages will be utilized as a stimulus and shown to respondents before answering the survey or interview questions.	Informed consent will be obtained. Information will be kept confidential. Research will be conducted within the IIE guidelines. Ethical clearance was received before research was conducted.	Subliminal messages in advertisements does not play any role in changing consumer buying behaviour.	Future studies can test this phenomenon on a larger group of respondents from the population. Future studies can use different advertisements or more advertisements in order to analyse the roles of subliminal messages in advertisements by having access to a larger unit of analysis. Future studies can focus on different advertising appeals as this study only focused on emotional and sex appeal. Future researchers can study the long-term roles of subliminal advertisements.	
	Secondary Questions					Population					
	1. What is the relation between subliminal messages in advertisements and consumer buying behaviour?					The population of which respondents will be selected is between the ages of 18 and 35, both male and female and lives in Pretoria, Gauteng.					
Research Problem	2. Are young South African consumers aware of the role of subliminal messages in advertisements?	Key Concepts	Key Theories			Sampling	Data Analysis Method(s)	Limitations to this research study includes limited time. A small group of respondents will be analysed therefore a representation of the larger population may not be possible. Limited resources and budget constraints.			
The main problem is to determine whether subliminal messages in advertisements plays any role in changing consumer buying behaviour.	3. Is subliminal advertising perceived by consumers as being ethically correct?	1. The roles of subliminal messages in advertisements.				Probability sampling using convenience. For the purpose of this study quantitative research (surveys) will be conducted on 20 respondents and qualitative research (interviews) on 3 respondents.					Thematic content analysis.
		2. Awareness of subliminal advertising.									Automated analysis by google forms.
		3. Ethical considerations regarding subliminal advertising	AIDA Model						Clearance regarding the controversies in literature related to subliminal advertisement has been gained.		

Appendix B: Ethics Clearance Letter

August 26, 2019

Student name: Benice Willemse

Student number: 19014217

Campus: Vega Pretoria

Re: Approval of Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Strategic Brand Communication Proposal and Ethics Clearance

Your research proposal and the ethical implications of your proposed research topic were reviewed by your supervisor and the campus research panel, a subcommittee of The Independent Institute of Education's Research and Postgraduate Studies Committee.

Your research proposal posed no significant ethical concerns and we hereby provide you with ethical clearance to proceed with your data collection.

There may be some aspects that you still need to address in your proposal. If this is the case, feedback will be provided to you in writing. You will need to address these aspects in consultation with your supervisor.

In the event of you deciding to change your research topic or methodology in any way, kindly consult your supervisor to ensure that all ethical considerations are adhered to and pose no risk to any participant or party involved. A revised ethical clearance letter will be issued in such instances.

We wish you all the best with your research!

Yours sincerely,



Amalia van Schalkwyk
Supervisor

Name:
Campus Postgraduate Coordinator

Appendix C: Originality report

Assignment Details ▾

> 

GRADE
LAST GRADED ATTEMPT

- /100

ATTEMPT
24/10/19 00:10

/100

SafeAssign ▾

13% overall match

Submission

 [Willemse, B Final submission without appendices.docx](#) 

OK

Start New

Appendix D: Advertisements

Advertisement 1 – Emotional Appeal:

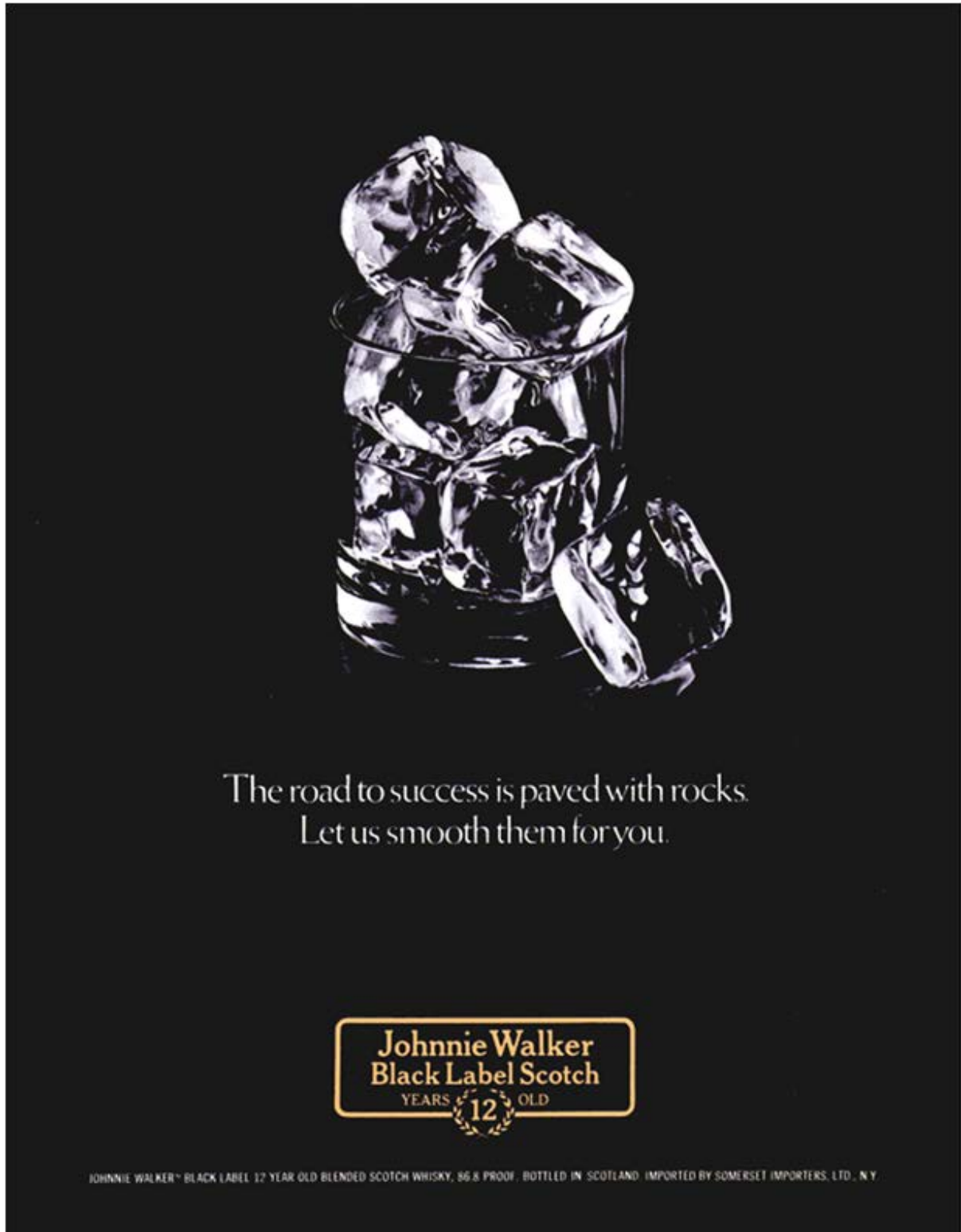


Figure 13: Johnnie Walker Black Label Scotch advertisement (Kerouac, 2019).



Figure 14: An isolated image of the monster found in the first ice cube (Kerouac, 2019).



Figure 15: An isolated image of the Ace of Spades found within an ice cube (Kerouac, 2019).



Figure 16: Isolated image of screaming man found within an ice cube (Kerouac, 2019).

Advertisement 2 – Sex Appeal:

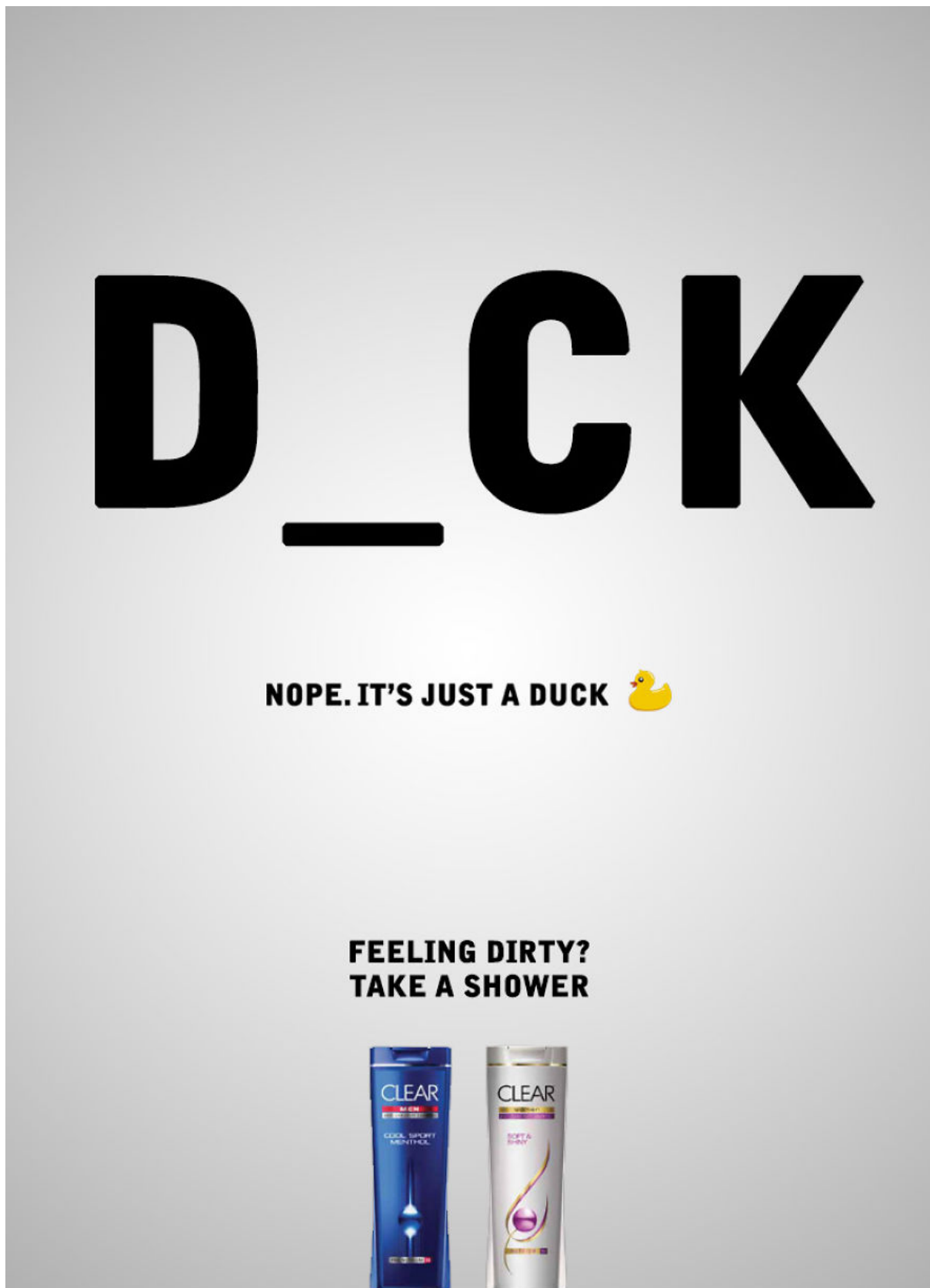


Figure 17: Advertisement 2 (Tsitsuashvili, 2017).

Appendix E: Survey

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. This survey is for academic purposes only; therefore, none of the information will be made public and all answers is to be kept confidential. This survey is purely on voluntary basis and no incentive is offered.

The aim of this survey is to determine the role of certain elements inserted into advertisements.

In order to be eligible to take part in this survey, you need to be between the age of 18 and 35 years old.

This survey will only take 10 to 15 minutes to complete, please answer all questions honestly and as accurately as possible.

Demographic questions

Please answer all the questions set out below.

Age

Gender

Female

Male

Prefer not to say

Other:

Race

Your answer

Where do you live (area)?

Your answer

Occupation

Your answer

Media influences

Please answer all of the questions in the section below.

What types of media are you mostly influenced by (Ashley, and Tuten, 2015)?

- ☐ Social media advertisements
- ☐ Newspaper advertisements
- ☐ Magazine advertisements
- ☐ TV advertisements
- ☐ YouTube advertisements
- ☐ Flyers
- ☐ Billboards
- ☐ Other:

How often do you purchase a product after viewing an advertisement for the product (Ashley *et al* 2015)?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Never

☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐

Always

How influential do you think advertisements are (Woodside, 2016)?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

No influence at all

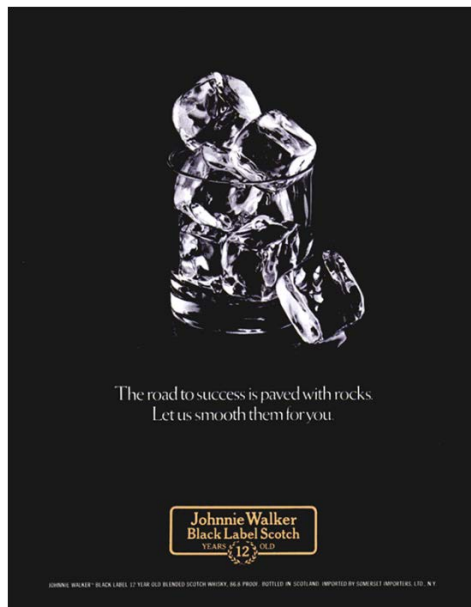
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Definitely determines my
buying decisions

Advertisement specific questions (Advertisement 1)

Please view the following advertisement and answer all questions in this section accordingly. The relevant brand in this advertisement aims to lead alcoholics to recovery.

Advertisement 1



Is this an advertisement that would attract your attention? (Ashley *et al* 2015)?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Maybe

Is this advertisement convincing (Soomro, 2018)?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Maybe

Does this advertisement have an emotional impact on you (Karremans, Stroebe and Claus, 2006)?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Maybe

How does the advertisement make you feel (Karremans, 2006)?

- ☐ I feel peaceful
- ☐ I feel scared
- ☐ I feel disturbed
- ☐ I feel depressed
- ☐ I feel neutral
- ☐ Other:

Would you make use of this brand after viewing the advertisement (Soomro, 2018)?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Maybe

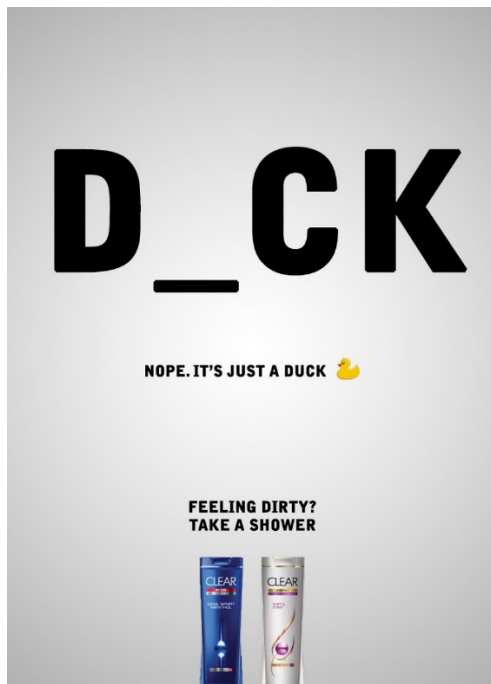
Would you recommend this brand to someone after viewing the advertisement (Soomro, 2018)?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Maybe

Advertisement specific questions (Advertisement 2)

Please view the following advertisement and answer all questions in this section accordingly.

Advertisement 2



Is this an advertisement that would attract your attention? (Ashley *et al* 2015)?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Maybe

Is this advertisement convincing (Soomro, 2018)?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Maybe

Does this advertisement have an emotional impact on you (Karremans, Stroebe and Claus, 2006)?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Maybe

How does the advertisement make you feel (Karremans, 2006)?

- ☐ I feel peaceful
- ☐ I feel scared
- ☐ I feel disturbed

- ☐ I feel depressed
- ☐ I feel neutral
- ☐ Other:

Would you make use of this brand after viewing the advertisement (Soomro, 2018)?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Maybe

Would you recommend this brand to someone after viewing the advertisement (Soomro, 2018)?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Maybe

General questions

Please answer all questions in this section in accordance with your knowledge of all printed advertisements you have seen so far (not only in this survey). A printed advertisement refers to any advertisement that is static (not in video format).

Have you ever heard of the term 'subliminal advertising' (Sabir *et al* 2016)?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Maybe

Subliminal advertisements are defined as Subliminal advertisements are defined as advertisements containing a message that cannot be perceived by the conscious mind. Subliminal messages can be defined as messages that is not perceived by the conscious mind and the viewer of the message is not able to consciously evaluate what is happening to him or her.

Do you believe that you can interpret subliminal messages in advertisements without being consciously aware of it (Florea, 2016)?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Maybe

How effective do you believe subliminal advertisements are in persuading consumers to buy certain products (Florea, 2016)?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not effective at all

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Highly effective

Do you think it is possible that subliminal messages can influence you to do things you normally would not do (Florea, 2016)?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Maybe

Do you think it is ethically correct for brands to make use of subliminal advertising (Belanche, 2019)?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Maybe

Thank you

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. Please submit your response below.

Appendix F: Interview guide

Thank you for taking the time to meet me and participate in this interview. This interview is for academic purposes only; therefore, none of the information will be made public and all answers is to be kept confidential. This interview is purely on voluntary basis and no incentive is offered.

The aim of this interview is to determine the role of certain elements inserted into advertisements.

In order to be eligible to take part in this interview, you need to be between the age of 18 and 35 years old.

This interview will only take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete, please answer all questions honestly and as accurately as possible.

Question guideline:

Demographic questions:

1. What is your age?
2. What is your gender?
3. In what area of Pretoria do you live?
4. What is your occupation?

Media questions:

1. What types of advertisements mostly draws your attention (Ashley *et al* 2015)?
2. Why does these advertisements relate to you (Ashley *et al* 2015)?
3. Do you believe that advertisements have an impact on your purchase intentions (Ashley *et al*)?
4. In what ways do advertisements influence you (Sabir *et al* 2016)?
5. What elements of an advertisement makes it stand out, Why?
6. What makes an advertisement memorable?

Advertisement related questions:

1. After viewing the first advertisement, what do you think about the advertisement?
2. How does this advertisement make you feel (Karremans, Stroebe and Claus, 2006)?
3. What elements of this advertisement makes you feel this way?
4. Do you have any sudden urges after viewing this advertisement (Karremans, *et al* 2006)?

5. What urges are you experiencing after viewing this advertisement (Karremans, *et al* 2006)?
6. Would you make use of this brand after viewing the advertisement, why (Soomro, 2018)?
7. What element of this advertisement stands out to you?
8. After viewing the second advertisement, what do you think about the advertisement?
9. How does this advertisement make you feel (Karremans, Stroebe and Claus, 2006)?
10. What elements of this advertisement makes you feel this way?
11. Do you have any sudden urges after viewing this advertisement (Karremans, *et al* 2006)?
12. What urges are you experiencing after viewing this advertisement (Karremans, *et al* 2006)?
13. Would you make use of this brand after viewing the advertisement, why (Soomro, 2018)?
14. What element of this advertisement stands out to you, why?

Subliminal messaging related questions:

1. Have you ever heard of subliminal advertising (Sabir *et al* 2016)?

Subliminal advertisements are defined as advertisements containing a message that cannot be perceived by the conscious mind. Subliminal messages can be defined as messages that is not perceived by the conscious mind and the viewer of the message is not able to consciously evaluate what is happening to him or her. In other words, it is a hidden message used to persuade you to use a certain product. You won't be able to see this message if you are not made aware of it.

2. What is your understanding of subliminal advertising (Sabir *et al* 2016)?
3. In what ways do you think subliminal messages can influence you? (Florea, 2016).
4. How effective do you think subliminal messages are in convincing people to make use of a brand? (Florea, 2016).
5. Do you think it is ethically correct for brands to make use of subliminal advertising? Why (Belanche, 2019)?

Thank you for your time and participation in this research study

Appendix G: Respondent consent forms

To whom it may concern,

My name is Benice Willemse and I am a student at Vega School Pretoria. I am currently conducting research under the supervision of Ivan Mkhomazi about the role of subliminal messages in advertisements. I hope that this research will enhance our understanding of subliminal advertising.

I would like to invite you to participate in my study. In order to explain to you what your participation in my study will involve, I have formulated questions that I will try to fully answer so that you can make an informed decision about whether or not to participate. If you have any additional questions that you feel are not addressed or explained in this information sheet, please do not hesitate to ask me for more information. Once you have read and understood all the information contained in this sheet and are willing to participate, please complete and sign the consent form below.

What will I be doing if I participate in your study?

I would like to invite you to participate in this research because you meet the required criteria to address the research problem in this study. If you decide to participate in this research, I would like to ask you a few questions in the form of an interview that will take about 10-20 minutes of your time to complete.

You can decide whether or not to participate in this research. If you decide to participate, you can choose to withdraw at any time or to decide not to answer particular interview questions.

Are there any risks/ or discomforts involved in participating in this study?

Whether or not you decide to participate in this research, there will be no negative impact on you. There are no direct risks or benefits to you if you participate in this study. If you find at any stage that you are not comfortable with the line of questioning, you may withdraw or refrain from participating.

Do I have to participate in the study?

- Your inclusion in this study is completely voluntary;
- If you do not wish to participate in this study, you have every right not to do so;
- Even if you agree to participate in this study, you may withdraw at any time without having to provide an explanation for your decision.

Will my identity be protected?

I promise to protect your identity. I will not use your name in any research summaries to come out of this research and I will also make sure that any other details are disguised so that nobody will be able to identify you. I would like to ask your permission to record the interviews, but only my supervisor, I and possibly a professional transcriber (who will sign a confidentiality agreement) will have access to these recordings. Nobody else, including anybody at Vega School will have access to your interview information. I would like to use quotes when I discuss the findings of the research but I will not use any recognisable information in these quotes that can be linked to you.

What will happen to the information that participants provide?

Once I have finished all interviews, I will write summaries to be included in my research report, which is a requirement to complete my BA Honours degree in Strategic Brand Communication. You may ask me to send you a summary of the research if you are interested in the final outcome of the study.

What happens if I have more questions about the study?

Please feel free to contact me or my supervisor should you have any questions or concerns about this research, or if there is anything you need to know before you decide whether or not to participate.

You should not agree to participate unless you are completely comfortable with the procedures followed.

My contact details are as follows:

Benice Willemse

0846452237

19014217@vegaconnect.co.za

The contact details of my supervisor are as follows:

Ivan Mkhomazi

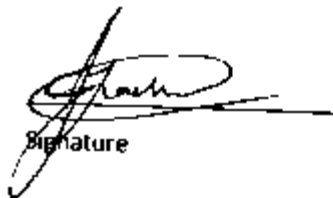
E-mail: 30180@iieconnect.co.za

Consent form for participants

I, Charles Jordan, agree to participate in the research conducted by Benice Willemse about the role of subliminal messages inserted into advertisements.

This research has been explained to me and I understand what participation in this research will involve. I understand that:

1. I agree to be interviewed for this research.
2. My confidentiality will be ensured. My name and personal details will be kept private.
3. My participation in this research is voluntary and I have the right to withdraw from the research at any time. There will be no repercussions should I choose to withdraw from the research.
4. I may choose not to answer any of the questions that are asked during the research interview.
5. I may be quoted directly when the research is published, but my identity will be protected.


Signature

23/08/2019
Date

Consent form for participants

I, Anneke van Leden, agree to participate in the research conducted by Benice Willemse about the role of subliminal messages inserted into advertisements.

This research has been explained to me and I understand what participation in this research will involve. I understand that:

1. I agree to be interviewed for this research.
2. My confidentiality will be ensured. My name and personal details will be kept private.
3. My participation in this research is voluntary and I have the right to withdraw from the research at any time. There will be no repercussions should I choose to withdraw from the research.
4. I may choose not to answer any of the questions that are asked during the research interview.
5. I may be quoted directly when the research is published, but my identity will be protected.


Signature

02/09/2011
Date

Consent form for participants

I, LAURA VAN DER HAER, agree to participate in the research conducted by Benice Willemse about the role of subliminal messages inserted into advertisements.

This research has been explained to me and I understand what participation in this research will involve. I understand that:

1. I agree to be interviewed for this research.
2. My confidentiality will be ensured. My name and personal details will be kept private.
3. My participation in this research is voluntary and I have the right to withdraw from the research at any time. There will be no repercussions should I choose to withdraw from the research.
4. I may choose not to answer any of the questions that are asked during the research interview.
5. I may be quoted directly when the research is published, but my identity will be protected.


Signature

26/08/2019
Date

Appendix H: Questionnaire Responses

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10	Q11	Q12	Q13	Q14	Q15
1	21	M	White	Montanapark, Pretoria	Student	YouTube advertisements	1	2	I like the brand, but I don't ever make use of it.	5	Maybe	No	I like the brand, but I still won't make use of it.	5	No
2	19	M	White	Wapadrand	Student teacher	Social media advertisements	3	5	I am not familiar with the brand	5	Yes	Yes	I like the brand, but will rarely make use of it	2	No
3	19	F	White	Groenkloof	Student	Social media advertisements	2	4	I like the brand, but rarely make use of it	3	Maybe	Yes	I like the brand, but will rarely make use of it	2	No
4	21	F	Black	Pretoria	Student	Social media advertisements	1	2	I like the brand, but rarely make use of it	4	Yes	Maybe	I like the brand, but will rarely make use of it	5	No
5	22	F	Caucasian	Rietondale	Student	YouTube advertisements	3	4	I don't really care about the brand	5	Yes	Maybe	I like the brand, but will rarely make use of it	5	No
6	25	F	Black	Pretoria	Student	Social media advertisements	3	4	I like the brand, but rarely make use of it	3	Yes	Yes	I like the brand, but will rarely make use of it	3	No
7	24	F	White	Pta-North	Educator	Social media advertisements	2	4	I like the brand, but rarely make use of it	3	Yes	Yes	I like the brand, but will rarely make use of it	3	Yes
8	20	F	White	Rietfontein Pretoria	Student	Social media advertisements	2	3	I like the brand, but rarely make use of it	3	Yes	Yes	I like the brand, but will rarely make use of it	4	No
9	22	F	Black	Pretoria Arcadia	Student and Interning	Social media advertisements	2	3	I don't really care about the brand	2	Yes	Maybe	I don't really care about the brand	3	No
10	32	F	White	Pretoria Gardens	Auxiliary service officer	Social media advertisements	3	4	I love the brand	2	Maybe	Yes	I love the brand	2	No

11	20	M	Cau- casian	Pretoria	Student	Social media advertisements	2	4	I rarely drink alcohol, but I understand the brand's appeal	5	No	No	I don't really care about the brand	5	No
12	20	F	White	Tshwane	Student	Social media advertisements	2	3	I don't really care about the brand	4	No	Maybe	I don't really care about the brand	4	No
13	20	F	White	Rietondale	Student at Tuks	Social media advertisements	1	2	I don't really care about the brand	5	No	No	I don't really care about the brand	5	No
14	22	F	White	Pretoria, Magalieskruin	Student	YouTube advertisements	2	2	I don't really care about the brand	5	No	No	I don't really care about the brand	5	No
15	22	M	White	Lynnwood	Student	YouTube advertisements	4	4	I like the brand, but rarely make use of it	5	Maybe	Yes	I like the brand, but will rarely make use of it	3	No
16	20	F	White	Queenswood	Student	TV advertisements	3	4	I like the brand, but rarely make use of it	4	Maybe	No	I like the brand, but will rarely make use of it	4	No
17	23	F	African	Pretoria East	Student	YouTube advertisements	3	3	I don't really care about the brand	4	No	No	I don't really care about the brand	4	No
18	31	F	White	Pretoria	Workshop Scheduling Officer	Social media advertisements	2	3	I don't really care about the brand	5	Maybe	Yes	I don't really care about the brand	5	No
19	31	F	White	Ninapark	Internal Auditor	Email	3	4	I don't really care about the brand	5	No	Yes	I don't really care about the brand	5	No
20	22	F	White	Pretoria	Student	Social media advertisements	2	4	I like the brand, but rarely make use of it	2	Yes	Yes	I like the brand, but will rarely make use of it	3	No

Q16	Q17	Q18	Q19	Q20	Q21	Q22	Q23	Q24	Q25	Q26	Q27	Q28	Q29	Q30	Q31
I feel neutral	Yes	I am not familiar with the brand	5	Yes	Yes	I love the brand	2	Yes	I feel humored	Yes	Yes	Yes	4	Maybe	Yes
I feel neutral	Yes	I love the brand	1	Yes	Yes	I love the brand	1	Yes	I feel humored	Yes	No	Yes	4	Yes	Yes
I feel confused	No	I am not familiar with the brand	2	Yes	Yes	I don't really care about the brand	4	No	I feel disturbed	No	Yes	Maybe	4	Yes	No
I feel neutral	No	I am not familiar with the brand	5	Yes	No	I don't really care about the brand	5	No	I feel humored	No	Yes	Maybe	3	Maybe	Maybe
I feel peaceful	Yes	I am not familiar with the brand	4	Yes	No	I don't really care about the brand	5	No	Maybe crude? But I can see the humor in it	No	Yes	Yes	4	Yes	Maybe
I feel neutral	Yes	I am not familiar with the brand	5	Yes	Yes	Neutral	5	No	I feel neutral	No	No	Maybe	4	No	Yes
I feel peaceful	Yes	I am not familiar with the brand	1	Yes	Yes	I don't really care about the brand	4	Yes	I feel humored	Yes	Yes	Yes	4	Yes	Yes
I feel neutral	Maybe	I am not familiar with the brand	4	Yes	Maybe	I like the brand, but will rarely make use of it	2	Maybe	I feel neutral	Yes	No	Yes	4	Yes	Maybe
I feel neutral	Maybe	I am not familiar with the brand	5	Yes	Yes	I like the brand, but will rarely make use of it	2	Yes	I feel humored	Yes	Yes	Yes	4	Yes	Yes
I feel neutral	Maybe	I like the brand, but will	3	Maybe	No	I like the brand, but will rarely make use of it	3	Maybe	I feel neutral	Maybe	No	Yes	4	Maybe	Maybe

		rarely make use of it													
I feel neutral	Maybe	I am not familiar with the brand	3	Yes	Yes	I liked the advertisement, but I would need to test out a product for myself before deciding whether or not I like it.	4	Yes	I feel humored	Maybe	Yes	Yes	2	No	Maybe
I feel neutral	No	I am not familiar with the brand	4	No	No	I don't really care about the brand	4	No	I feel neutral	No	No	Yes	5	Yes	No
I feel neutral	No	I don't really care about the brand	4	Maybe	Maybe	I like the brand, but will rarely make use of it	3	No	I feel neutral	Maybe	No	Yes	3	No	No
I feel neutral	No	I am not familiar with the brand	5	Yes	Yes	I like the brand, but will rarely make use of it	4	No	I feel humored	Maybe	No	Yes	4	Maybe	Yes
I feel neutral	Maybe	I am not familiar with the brand	5	Yes	Yes	I like the brand, but will rarely make use of it	3	Maybe	I feel humored	Yes	Yes	Yes	4	Maybe	Yes
I feel neutral	Maybe	I am not familiar with the brand	5	Yes	Yes	I love the brand	2	Maybe	I feel humored	Yes	No	Yes	5	Maybe	Maybe
I feel neutral	Maybe	I am not familiar with the brand	5	Yes	Yes	I don't really care about the brand	5	No	I feel humored	No	No	Yes	4	Yes	No
I feel neutral	Maybe	I am not familiar with the brand	3	Yes	Yes	I don't really care about the brand	3	No	I feel humored	Yes	No	Maybe	3	Maybe	Maybe
I feel peaceful	Maybe	I am not familiar	4	Yes	No	I dont know what makes it special	4	No	I feel humored	No	Maybe	Maybe	3	Maybe	Yes

		with the brand													
I feel neutral	Maybe	I am not familiar with the brand	5	Yes	Yes	I like the brand, but will rarely make use of it	1	Yes	Funny	Yes	Yes	Yes	5	Yes	No

Appendix I: Interview transcripts

Interview 1:

Thank you for taking the time to meet me and participate in this interview. This interview is for academic purposes only; therefore, none of the information will be made public and all answers is to be kept confidential. This interview is purely on voluntary basis and no incentive is offered.

The aim of this interview is to determine the role of certain elements inserted into advertisements.

In order to be eligible to take part in this interview, you need to be between the age of 18 and 35 years old.

This interview will only take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete, please answer all questions honestly and as accurately as possible.

Interviewer: So, if we can just verify, what's your age?

Participant: 21.

Interviewer: And your gender.

Participant: Female.

Interviewer: And in what area of Pretoria do you live?

Participant: Waterkloof.

Interviewer: What's your current occupation?

Participant: Student, full time student.

Interviewer: Ok, thank you. Firstly, I'm just going to ask you some media related questions. What types of advertisements mostly draw your attention?

Participant: YouTube ads, Instagram ads and Facebook ads, like ones that pop up. I also do see billboards but especially when I'm in the passenger seat, sometimes when I'm driving.

Interviewer: Ok, so, why would you say do these advertisements relate to you specifically?

Participant: I spend a lot of time on Instagram and YouTube, and It's not something you can control, like you're busy watching and it pops up or you're scrolling like if it's

someone else's photo and it just pops up. And like a billboard if it's so big in front of you and it's at a robot then you'll look but then you won't catch the detail, you'll just like I don't know... see the company but I won't maybe remember the phone number or something.

Interviewer: Ok I understand. So, do you believe that these advertisements have an impact on your purchase decisions?

Participant: Yes, I think if it applies to me like if it's clothing or something that I'm looking for anyway like an example is say now we talk about something and you know sometimes your phone then advertises it after you've spoken about it coincidentally. Or you see something after you've noted 'oh, I need this or that' seems interesting. Especially events, I take notice of those ads' coz that's cool. Yah.

Interviewer: Ok, I understand. So, in what ways do these advertisements influence you?

Participant: They catch my interest and then I don't, like I make a larger effort, like a mental note to maybe go google more about it or to go visit the physical store. Sometimes I do go to the shops like on a Saturday or something and then I think of there's this three for two specials at clicks or something yah, stuff like that I do remember. Erm let me think...

Interviewer: It's fine. Ok so, thinking of advertising in general, what specific advertisement, or what specific elements makes an advertisement stand out?

Participant: I like bright colours and like big text. It kind of irritates me, and then catches my attention for the wrong reason if it's like very small text and I can't make out what's the point of the ad and the company name. So, I do appreciate good ads that are ecstatically pleasing or like illustrated or photographed well, creatively. So yah, that grabs my attention. I think it doesn't even need to have a call to action like if I see something, I will make the effort to go google it myself. It doesn't necessarily need to have a phone number or something coz no one's going to do that.

Interviewer: Ok yah, I get it. What would you say is like the key thing that makes an advertisement memorable?

Participant: That it's bright and bold and different and like speaks to the brand that it's advertising or the company. So, it fits like, for example furniture needs to be like... you must see it's true to like way lands have that very specific style and then I'll remember oh what was that? And then it will be easier to remember but when, if the ad is like not got like a very... what's the word? Something that is not true to their target market or

not sure of their typical style then it's way harder for me to remember. Then I can't place where I saw it from what I remember about it.

Interviewer: Ok, so I'm just going to show you an ad and you can just take some time to look at that. I know that's a bit small but you can zoom in. Ok, so that's the ad. So, after viewing this advertisement, what is your overall observation? What do you think of the ad?

Participant: I really like it because it's, erm it's not... is it a pun? I can't think now but it's like very witty and well done. And it's still classy and true to Johnny Walker. The colours, the style, it feels very old and vintage and expensive and like elite. Everything they're trying to portray. It's timeless. I like the colours even though it's pretty dark, I think it works well. And the, yah the saying ties in, like everything ties in. Yah there's no picture of whiskey but I won't forget that it's Johnny walker.

Interviewer: So, how does this advertisement make you feel? Does it provoke any emotion and in what ways?

Participant: Not really... emotion I'd say. I think because it's dark, I don't like dark things because it makes me think it's dirty which I know is a personal thing. So, I don't really feel excited or anything. And I don't personally drink whiskey so I'm not like wowed by this ad and then drawn to do something about it. But yah I'd say neutral because I think it's still a nice ad but it doesn't make me feel any type of way.

Interviewer: Ok so, well I think you already explained why you don't feel so I'm just going to... So, would you say you have any sudden urges after viewing this ad?

Participant: No. Coz I think whiskey is like you either drink it or you don't. It's an acquired taste.

Interviewer: Would you make use of Johnny walker after viewing the advertisement?

Participant: I like the ad, it's quite classy so I would maybe re-gift it, like buy it as a gift for someone.

Interviewer: What element of this advertisement stands out most to you?

Participant: I think the light reflecting off of the ice cubes and the glass is nice. And then it's the same colour reflected in the text. So, I like that.

Interviewer: I'm just going to show you the second ad. You can just have a look at that.

Participant: Is duck the brand name?

Interviewer: No, duck is just the way they're using... or a persuasion method they use to catch your attention. The brand is the clear soap.

Participant: Ok, cool.

Interviewer: Ok so what do you think about this ad? What's your overall impression?

Participant: I don't really like it. I think it's quite like cheap. Not cheap, a poor attempt at humour. I think you've got to be quite immature to think that's funny and then the immature market that finds this funny is not typically your consumer which is a bit of a generalization but like I buy my own soaps and... maybe let's just make that personal. I don't think it's funny and I buy my own soaps and shampoo and stuff so yah it just doesn't appeal to me.

Interviewer: Ok how does this advertisement make you feel? Does it provoke any emotion?

Participant: It makes me feel like, it's not the angle I would like to consider myself as dirty of I need a shower. Obviously after I go to gym but I wouldn't want to think that it's negative. And why would I want to go after a negative ad to go buy something that is an essential that also makes me feel good. It doesn't add up for me.

Interviewer: What element of this advertisement makes you feel this way?

Participant: The D with the space and the C, K that's so big, like that's the focus. And then the product is so small like... so... and then the nope. The language used is very... not sadistic erm non challan whatever. It's not relatable or strong for me. Not impactful.

Interviewer: You've got a very specific view of what you want in advertisements. Do you have any sudden urges after viewing this ad?

Participant: To look at another ad.

Interviewer: So would you make use of this brand after viewing the ad?

Participant: No.

Interviewer: Strong no?

Participant: No.

Interviewer: What elements of this advertisement stands out to you, if any?

Participant: The bold black text. My eye was actually drawn to the little duck picture to be honest. Yah, that's all. And I must say it irritated me that it's kind of black along the side. It's also not clean. Like not pure white which irritates me.

Interviewer: So, that's it for the advertisement related questions. So, have you ever heard of the term subliminal advertising?

Participant: Yes.

Interviewer: What is your understanding of the term?

Participant: I understand that it wants to like subconsciously kind of hypnotise or impart a message to the viewer without that viewer specifically realising. Like for example the dirty one, oh, you are dirty so you need this product kind of thing.

Interviewer: Yah, I think you've got a really thorough understanding. So just to sum it up, it's like a hidden message that's inserted into an ad to persuade you to use the product. Ok. So, in what ways do you think subliminal messages can influence you?

Participant: I think definitely they can influence you to have a certain, to change your perceptions about yourself, about life, about the products you use especially when a subliminal message is like stacked on top of each other. If you see a lot of ads telling you you're dirty, you're going to be far more vigilant of like washing yourself. You know, it's the same as with social media, it makes us think something is real when it might not be. So, our perception of that gets skewed eventually, possibly.

Interviewer: Ok, how effective do you think subliminal messages is in convincing people to make use of a brand?

Participant: I do think they are effective, but they need to be done in the right way, they need to be subtle when it is called for and a little bit stronger if it's for a positive cause. But I think if it's too blatant, if it's too absurd the person might just miss it like I just did for the duck ad. Erm, yah I do think it can be very impactful on the long term if done on a continual basis.

Interviewer: And would you say that it is ethically correct for brands to make use of subliminal messages?

Participant: I think it's not ethical for vulnerable groups because like young people with all this access to media are not of a discerning age and intellect level to be able to make the right choices. Erm, so any vulnerable group, I think no. but I think for a normal adult, I mean this is advertising, that's how it is so, I think any person can read something and feel oh, this doesn't feel right to me, or this doesn't apply to my life and just let it go. So, I think that's how it is.

Interviewer: Ok, well that's it. Thank you so much for participating.

Participant: Pleasure.

Interview 2:

Thank you for taking the time to meet me and participate in this interview. This interview is for academic purposes only; therefore, none of the information will be made public and all answers is to be kept confidential. This interview is purely on voluntary basis and no incentive is offered.

The aim of this interview is to determine the role of certain elements inserted into advertisements.

In order to be eligible to take part in this interview, you need to be between the age of 18 and 35 years old.

This interview will only take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete, please answer all questions honestly and as accurately as possible.

Interviewer: So, if we can just verify, what's your age?

Participant: I'm 22 years old.

Interviewer: And your gender?

Participant: I'm male.

Interviewer: And in what area of Pretoria do you live?

Participant: In Villeria.

Interviewer: And what's your current occupation?

Participant: I'm a student.

Interviewer: So firstly, I'm going to start with some media related questions. So, what would you say, what types of advertisements mostly draws your attention?

Participant: I would say mostly billboard adverts, as you drive past them. Yah they are quite interesting sometimes.

Interviewer: Ok, why does these specific advertisements relate to you? Billboards specifically, what makes them stand out?

Participant: Mostly humoristic categories speaks in the advert. Yah, from what I experience billboards are mostly humoristic in a scene. But yah they are big and colourful and that also helps with drawing attention.

Interviewer: Do you believe that these advertisements have an impact on your purchase intentions?

Participant: Yes, I would say so.

Interviewer: In what ways do they influence your purchase intentions?

Participant: My main focus on buying products is its price. I would consider the price mainly. If it's good quality for like the price, then I definitely won't buy a better brand per say, but yah. What I meant with... why I'm saying this is that billboard adverts are mostly like expensive products like cars or cell phones. Yah, mostly technology related products. So, yah I would say it would impact my decision on buying a cell phone perhaps. But yah, its not everyday products that I buy which I see on billboards so yah.

Interviewer: Yah, I understand what you're saying. What elements of an advertisement makes it stand out? You don't need to think only about a billboard advertisement now, think of any advertisement. What element makes it stand out?

Participant: People definitely like, it takes a certain kind of person like their facial expressions and how they look and.... Yah. That's quite an important aspect.

Interviewer: So, the people displayed in the advertisement?

Participant: Yes, I think that's the main... yah and what they are saying, the messages that they portray. Erm, yah like, regardless of what they are advertising, like what they are saying is quite like, it draws attention. It doesn't matter if it's related to the product or not.

Interviewer: Ok, and then what makes an advertisement memorable?

Participant: Jingles and yah, I think also again the message behind the product. Not even behind the product but a catchphrase for instance. I can't think of an example. Yah, like I think if there's a powerful message that the advertisement portrays then it will definitely be memorable.

Interviewer: Thank you very much. So now I'm going to show you an advertisement. Then I'm going to ask you some questions related to these advertisements. You can take a look at this Johnny Walker advertisement, take your time, tell me when you're ready. Just pay attention to all the details etc. Ok so, what do you think about the advertisement? What's your overall impression?

Participant: So, there's definitely wordplay between the word's "rocks" and yah the message that they portray. Yah it's for me personally, I'm not too much of an alcoholic fan per say. I enjoy alcoholic beverages but advertisements of alcohol do not impact me that much. It would definitely not make me buy one alcoholic beverage above another. But yah, for me the message that they portray is that, well how I see it is that like they say the: "road to success is paved with rocks, let us smooth them for you." So, what I think the message that they portray is alcohol will make your live easier, if I

understand it correctly, which is quite a powerful statement but it's negative in a sense to think that alcohol would make your life easier.

Interviewer: Ok, so would you say, or how does this advertisement make you feel?

Participant: Yah, it does not make me feel any certain way, erm, it's just yah. It's just they're not applicable to me. Yes.

Interviewer: So, you don't really relate to the advertisement?

Participant: No.

Interviewer: So, would you say you have any sudden urges after viewing this advertisement?

Participant: No, definitely not by Johnny walker.

Interviewer: Would you make use of this brand after viewing this advertisement?

Participant: I would still drink Johnny Walker at a specific occasion regardless of the advert. As I said, alcoholic beverage advertisements do not influence my decision on which kind of alcohol I drink.

Interviewer: Would you say there's a certain element that stands out to you in this advertisement? And why does this element stand out?

Participant: Well, the glass is full of ice which is quite ironic because they are not advertising ice, they are advertising Johnny Walker. I don't see any alcohol in the ad, I only see ice which is like overflowed. The glass is full of ice which is interesting.

Interviewer: There's another advertisement that I want to show you. If you can take a moment to have a look at that advertisement please. You can tell me when you're ready.

Participant: Ok.

Interviewer: So, what do you think about this advertisement? You can just explain your overall impression.

Participant: So, it's very suggestive towards sex or having a sex appeal to.

Interviewer: How does this advertisement make you feel?

Participant: How do you mean how does it make me feel?

Interviewer: Is there any emotions being provoked?

Participant: Not per say. It's quite funny. As I said it's suggestive but still humoristic in a sense so I think it's a creative way in which they go about to advertise something that, yah, like I said suggestive which isn't normally... It doesn't provoke any certain emotions.

Interviewer: What elements of this advertisement makes you feel that it is suggestive?

Participant: The fact that they, well, the word on top of the advert clearly states the word 'dick' and after that they say feeling dirty. So yah, which leads to you taking a shower. So, yes.

Interviewer: Ok, thank you. Would you say you have any sudden urges after viewing this advertisement?

Participant: No, it's just funny. Like, yah, as I've said, the previous advert did not make me want to buy Johnny Walker, so this advert does not make me want to go take a shower. But it, yah the way they advertise it as it is a suggestive advert, it's still very humoristic, so I think the main feeling that it can arouse at viewers is the humoristic side of it.

Interviewer: Ok, would you make use of this brand after viewing the advertisement?

Participant: The type of product that they advertise is a daily hygienic product. So, for me again it would not be about the product specifically, it would rather be about the price. So, if I saw this product in the shop and its price was better than competitors' price, I would use this product regardless of this advertisement.

Interviewer: Thank you, and just a last question related to the ad. What elements stands out the most to you and why?

Participant: I think the element of the sex appeal that they've used is the most visible aspect of this advert.

Interviewer: Why do you feel this way?

Participant: It's clear that they wanted to ... that they went about to take a sex appeal in this advert. It was not like, it was not spontaneously, but very much planned to use a sex appeal for this advert.

Interviewer: Ok, thank you. That's the last question related to the advertisement. So, in the next section I'm just going to move into questions related to subliminal messaging. So, have you ever heard of the term subliminal advertising?

Participant: I have heard about it and how I understand it is hidden messages that completely has nothing to do with the advertisement itself, but that portrays a deeper or darker message than what the product wants to sell.

Interviewer: Ok, I can just give you a short definition of subliminal advertising. You're 100% correct, but just to make sure we're on the same page. So subliminal advertisements are defined as advertisements containing a message that cannot be perceived by the conscious mind. So, subliminal messages can be defined as a message, or a hidden message that's used to persuade you to use a certain product.

And like you said, you won't necessarily be able to see this message if you are not made aware of it. So, in what ways do you think subliminal messages can influence you?

Participant: I'm studying psychology well, I know the impact of the subconscious mind, or the environment of the subconscious mind like how it picks up and how it influences your behaviour. Yah, so, I think if a company or a brand goes about using subliminal messages in a very effective way it would definitely help their product to sell. Yah, it could definitely be effective in using a customer's subliminal, subconscious mind in buying their product. It's very persuasive but can be very effective.

Interviewer: And, well you've actually already answered this question but how effective do you think subliminal messages are in convincing people to use a certain brand?

Participant: As I said, the human subconscious is a very powerful aspect of one's mind. Everything that goes on in the environment that your conscious mind doesn't even think about goes into your subconsciousness. The same with the advertisement, subliminal advertisements or subliminal messages can be very impactful.

Interviewer: Thank you, and then just a final question: Do you think it is ethically correct for brands to make use of subliminal advertisements?

Participant: For me personally, I don't think it's a problem. I'm not a fan of persuading people and I'm against the persuading aspect of like getting people to buy your product. I'm definitely not standing for it, but I won't say it's unethical, because then you can... as I said, it's... same as with the environment, you can experience messages from the environment as well which will impact you in a certain way, but those things in the environment won't disappear. So, yah, it works in exactly the same way. So, I won't say it's unethical but the persuasive part isn't for me very nice.

Interviewer: Thank you very much for your participation in this study and thank you very much for the time you took to meet me. I really appreciate it.

Participant: Pleasure, thanks.

Interview 3:

Thank you for taking the time to meet me and participate in this interview. This interview is for academic purposes only; therefore, none of the information will be made public and all answers is to be kept confidential. This interview is purely on voluntary basis and no incentive is offered.

The aim of this interview is to determine the role of certain elements inserted into advertisements.

In order to be eligible to take part in this interview, you need to be between the age of 18 and 35 years old.

This interview will only take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete, please answer all questions honestly and as accurately as possible.

Interviewer: So, if we can just verify your age?

Participant: 22

Interviewer: And your gender?

Participant: Female.

Interviewer: And in what area of Pretoria do you live?

Participant: Sinoville.

Interviewer: What is your current occupation?

Participant: I'm a student.

Interviewer: Ok, thank you. Firstly, I'm going to ask you some media related questions. So, what types of advertisements mostly draw your attention?

Participant: I think ads that has an emotional appeal to it, that I know that has meaning to it. Also, ads that is relevant to me and my lifestyle.

Interviewer: On what platforms will these advertisements attract you?

Participant: It depends, but I actually do like a good cinema ad. I also... I'm not a fan of ads on social media, just because I feel that it's my private time. So, I don't look at ads there. Cinema is ok for me and the rest I actually block out. So, yah.

Interviewer: Ok, and why does these advertisements relate to you?

Participant: The emotional?

Interviewer: Yes.

Participant: Erm, I think because it has meaning. It's not a brand... it doesn't feel like just a product they want to shove down my throat and get me to buy it. Like I can just

think of the FNB ad with the small girl singing. That was a few years back but it really had an impact on me. I don't know why but all the insurance ads like Santam had great ads about being proudly South African. So, anything that resonates to me on an emotional level because it has meaning, it's not just superficial.

Interviewer: Ok, in what ways do these advertisements influence you?

Participant: Erm, I think it will either make me... If I think of the South African, if it plays on the whole being proudly South African it makes me proud of my heritage and where I come from. And then on an emotional level, I feel... say again what's the question?

Interviewer: How do they influence you?

Participant: How do they influence me. If it's on an emotional level I resonate with the brand. I grow fonder towards the brand.

Interviewer: Yeah, that answers the question. What elements of an advertisement makes it stand out?

Participant: People, always the people. But someone that I can identify with. It should... if it's... the thing is, the best American ad don't appeal to me because I don't understand necessarily the context and their jokes. So, it could have won an international ad award but it doesn't resonate to me, it doesn't speak to me. So, I think it should be relevant to me. If it's relevant and I can identify with the people.

Interviewer: And the last question for the media related question is what makes an advertisement memorable?

Participant: If I knew that I would be a millionaire. Erm, I don't know, I think it differs for people but I just again, it's relevancy.

Interviewer: Yeah, if it's relevant to you it would impact you.

Participant: Yes.

Interviewer: So, then I just want to show you an advertisement. You can just look at that ad and tell me when you're ready.

Participant: Ok.

Interviewer: So, after looking at the first ad, what do you think of the advertisement? What's your overall impression?

Participant: It's a bit bland, it's... I think they wanted to go for the simplicity look, but it feels a bit dark. And yeah.

Interviewer: Ok, then how does this advertisement make you feel? Does it provoke any emotion and what emotion?

Participant: Erm, I'm struggling to associate an emotion with it. Is that ok? Yah I think I do feel... I don't know if I'm allowed to feel neutral to it, but yah, it doesn't really provoke any emotion.

Interviewer: Ok, that's fine. So, do you have any sudden urges after viewing this advertisement?

Participant: None whatsoever.

Interviewer: Would you make use of this brand after viewing the ad? And why?

Participant: No, just because I... I like the brand, Johnny Walker, but I don't drink scotch. So, I wouldn't make use of the brand.

Interviewer: So, is there an element in this ad that stands out? And what element?

Participant: I think the ice cubes and then also the label, the gold Johnny Walker label.

Interviewer: What makes them stand out?

Participant: Erm, just the contrast between the ice and the black background, and also the contrast between the black and the gold.

Interviewer: Ok, then I just want to show you the second ad.

Participant: Ok.

Interviewer: Ok, what's your overall impression of this advertisement?

Participant: Erm, I don't know (laughter). Ok, I'm sorry. Erm, my overall impression, I think they are... it has some sexual innuendo, but yah. Erm, I think it is clear that they were trying to play on something else.

Interviewer: And how does the ad make you feel?

Participant: It makes me... it's difficult to describe my emotions. Erm, I think, I'm a bit shocked. I'm a bit shocked.

Interviewer: What element of this ad makes you feel shocked?

Participant: I think the underscore with the... they want you to fill in the word with your mind and the first thought that comes to mind is a dirty one. Yah, it is...

Interviewer: Do you have any sudden urges after viewing this ad?

Participant: None whatsoever.

Interviewer: Would you make use of the brand being advertised after viewing this ad?

Participant: No.

Interviewer: Why not?

Participant: I think it's bad advertising. There's no thought that goes into it. So, I don't think it's meaningful. I just think it's a bad advertisement.

Interviewer: Is there anything about this ad that stands out to you?

Participant: Definitely the DCK part. The big word.

Interviewer: Well that's it for the advertisement related questions. So then, erm, just the last section is questions related with subliminal messages. So, have you ever heard of the term subliminal advertising?

Participant: Erm, I'm not very familiar with the term.

Interviewer: Ok, I'll just give you a short definition of what it is. So, a subliminal message is a hidden message that is inserted into the advertisement. So, it's something that you can't see with your naked eye. Someone has to make you aware of it before you realise that it's there. So, it's like a persuasion method that is used to subliminally or in the subconscious mind of the viewer to persuade them. Ok, do you understand what I mean?

Participant: Yes, I do.

Interviewer: In what ways do you think subliminal messages can influence you?

Participant: I think probably it can influence you to be more susceptible towards the product. Or, being more scared if they use it in erm, alcohol ads or, not alcohol, arrive alive. To make you more... to scare you and using subliminal ads to influence you in that way. I don't know.

Interviewer: Ok, how effective do you think subliminal messages are in convincing people to make use of a brand.

Participant: I don't think it's very effective.

Interviewer: You don't? Why not?

Participant: I think... I think it's difficult to determine whether it is effective or not. Because it's difficult to determine whether it was the subliminal messaging or the content itself that did the work to persuade me. So, erm, just because it's... how do you determine which one it was.

Interviewer: Yah, that's a valid point to make. And just the last question, do you think it is ethically correct for brands to make use of subliminal advertising?

Participant: No, because I do value honesty. Although I want to work in the advertising industry, I do feel that you should approach advertising with honesty. Yes, subliminal advertising is not very honest.

Interviewer: Ok, well that's it. Thank you very much for your participation.