HUNGRY?
EAT POPCORN
HUNGRY?
EAT POPCORN
Replicating The Subliminal Test
That May Have Never Happened
The Lee Theatre was the only movie house in Fort Lee at the time Vicary allegedly conducted his experiments. The marquee in this photo advertises *Stalag 17*, a Billy Wilder movie from 1953, four years before Vicary and his men arrived. *Courtesy of the Fort Lee Film Commission.*
TACHISTOSCOPE
Persuaders' Get Deeply 'Hidden' Tool: Subliminal Projection

New York, Sept. 12—Market researcher James M. Vicary today unveiled his new secret weapon for advertisers—the “invisible commercial.” It is based on the theory of “subliminal” projection.

Assuming the idea is feasible, this will enable advertisers to flash sales messages on TV without the viewers being consciously aware of them. The messages will reach the audience subliminally—that is, below the threshold of sensation or awareness.

Mr. Vicary showed reporters a film interlarded with Coca-Cola commercials. The Coke messages were flashed at the rate of one every five seconds, and only a few of them were detected by the audience. Mr. Vicary explained that these few were visible because he rigged the mechanism so that the reporters could see what was being done invisibly.

Mr. Vicary, head of the motivation research company bearing his name, said the commercial messages are superimposed on a film as “very brief overlays of light.” They are so rapid—up to 1/3,000 of a second—that they cannot be seen by the audience.

Mr. Vicary reported that he recently tested the “invisible commercial” in a New Jersey movie theater. The tests ran for six weeks, during which time some 45,000 persons attended the theater. Two advertising messages were projected—one urging the audience to eat popcorn, the other suggesting, “Drink Coca-Cola.”

According to Mr. Vicary, the “invisible commercial” increased popcorn sales by 57.5% and Coca-Cola sales by 18.1%.

Mr. Vicary emphasized that his subliminal ads are useful only as reminder advertising. They will not, he said, move a person to switch brands.

Mr. Vicary has joined with Rene Barjavel, a psychologist of U. S. Army propaganda producer, to form Subliminal Projection Co. Mr. Thayer is president of Subliminal Projection, which has applied for a patent on the process.

Mr. Vicary said subliminal advertising will be a boon to the consumer, because it will eliminate bothersome commercials and allow more entertainment time. #
“According to Mr. Vicary, the “Invisible commercial” increased popcorn sales by 57.5% and Coca-Cola sales by 18.1%”
“Having gone to see something that’s not supposed to be seen, and having not seen it, as forecast, the FCC and Congressmen seemed satisfied.”

*Printer’s Ink, 1958*
THE OPERATIONAL POTENTIAL OF SUBLIMINAL PERCEPTION
Richard Gafford

It must be concluded that there are so many elusive variables and so many sources of irregularity in the device of directing subliminal messages to a target individual that its operational feasibility is exceedingly limited.
Fig 2. Percentage of participants choosing Lipton Ice as a function of thirst and prime, Study 2.
SUBLIMINAL MESSAGE

ONLINE SURVEY

MEASURE THE EFFECT
HUNGRY?
EAT POPCORN
30 MILLISECONDS
CLAIMED 1/3 OF A MILLISECOND
30 MILLISECONDS
The Original Set-up

Every five seconds, the words “Hungry? Eat popcorn” flash for 3 milliseconds.

(Recreation by Life, 1958)
Our Set-Up

Every five seconds, the words “Hungry? Eat popcorn” flash for 30 milliseconds (the duration of a single frame), immediately followed by a string of X’s.
EXPERIMENTAL:
Subliminal with mask

CONTROL 1:
Mask only

CONTROL 2:
Explicit

CONTROL 3:
Plain video
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THE SET-UP</th>
<th>1957</th>
<th>2016</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>Movie theater</td>
<td>Online</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants</td>
<td>45,000 movie goers</td>
<td>A balanced survey panel (n=1,200)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stimulus</td>
<td>Movie <em>Picnic</em> (1h 53m)</td>
<td>A clip from <em>Picnic</em> (1m 48s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subliminal message</td>
<td>Hungry? Eat popcorn</td>
<td>Hungry? Eat popcorn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exposure</td>
<td>1/3ms every 5 seconds</td>
<td>30ms, followed by a 30ms mask, every 5 seconds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>No exposure to the subliminal message (plain movie)</td>
<td>1. No exposure to the subliminal message (plain clip)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Exposure to the mask only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3. Exposure to the message shown explicitly (once, for 2 seconds)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metric</td>
<td>Sales of popcorn</td>
<td>Stated preferences, price sensitivity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Possibly never happened</strong></td>
<td><strong>Actually happened</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
THE RESULTS?
If you could have only one of these typical movie snacks right now, which, if any, would you choose?

PRETZELS | POPCORN | CHIPS | CANDY | PEANUTS | NACHOS | NONE OF THESE

Subliminal with mask

Mask only

Explicit

Plain video

43% 41% 46% 41%

% who chose popcorn, saw Picnic
If you could have only one of these typical movie snacks right now, which, if any, would you choose?

If 42% chose popcorn, they also saw the Pirates of the Caribbean trailer. If 50% chose popcorn, they only saw a plain video.
“Subliminal advertising will be a boon to the consumer because it will eliminate bothersome commercials and allow more entertainment time.”

James Vicary
support@aytm.com

Request your copy of the study

LOOKING FOR MESSAGE, viewers at a Corrigan-Becker demonstration try to detect sublimmed words by waving fingers before eyes. Few succeeded.

Life, 1958