

**NEUROMARKETING AND SUBLIMINAL PERCEPTION PHENOMENON: A
CONCEPTUAL STUDY**

NÖROPAZARLAMA VE SUBLİMİNAL ALGI OLGUSU: KAVRAMSAL BİR ÇALIŞMA

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ABSTRACT

Today, the use of neuromarketing and subliminal messages in creating consumer perception is seen as similar concepts. However, the common aspect of these two concepts is only the subconscious interaction. Apart from this, concepts are quite different from each other. While subliminal perception seeks to change the subconscious mind with the attempt to change the buying behavior, neurological marketing seeks to understand how this region, which is below the threshold, works and influences.

In this study, both subliminal perception and neuro marketing have been explained in depth and tried to explain the relations and differences between them. The common point of the two is seen as studies on the brain, but one is done to influence one and the other to make it clear why it is affected. Due to the fact that neuroimaging techniques used in neuro marketing have just recently been understood and the development is obvious, it is not possible to clearly distinguish the difference with subliminal advertising perception. However, the occurrence of ethical concerns of the subliminal population emphasizes the need for clarifying the purpose of neuro marketing. At the same time, neuro marketing techniques for businesses are considered to be an important tool for determining consumer needs.

Keywords: Neuromarketing, Subliminal Perception, Consumer Perception, Consumer Behavior

ÖZ

Günümüzde nöropazarlama ve subliminal mesajlar benzer kavramlar olarak görülmekte ve tüketici algısı yaratmada kullanıldığı düşünülmektedir. Ancak bu iki kavramın ortak yönü yalnızca bilinçaltı etkileşimini konu almasıdır. Bunun dışında kavramlar birbirinden oldukça farklıdır. Sübliminal algı, bilinçaltı, satın alma davranışını daha yeni yeni anlaşıyor olması ve gelişime açık bilinç eşliğinin altında kalan bu bölgenin nasıl çalıştığı ve etkileyen etmenleri anlamaya yönelmektedir.

Yapılan bu çalışmada her iki kavram derinlemesine açıklanarak, aralarındaki ilişki ve farklılıklar açıklanmaya çalışılmıştır. İkisinin ortak noktası beyin üzerine yapılan çalışmalar olarak görülse de, biri etkilemek, diğeri ise neden etkilendiğini açığa çıkarmak adına yapılmaktadır. Nöro pazarlamada kullanılan beyin görüntüleme tekniklerinin daha yeni yeni anlaşılıyor olması ve gelişime açık bulunması nedeniyle henüz subliminal reklam algısıyla farklılığını ortaya net bir şekilde koyamamaktadır. Bununla birlikte, subliminal algının oluşturduğu etik kaygıların yaşanması, nöro pazarlamanın amacının net bir şekilde ortaya konmasının gereğini vurgulamaktadır. Aynı zamanda da işletmeler için nöro pazarlama tekniklerinin tüketici ihtiyaçlarını belirleme yolunda önemli bir araç olduğu düşünülmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Nöropazarlama, Subliminal Algı, Tüketici Algısı, Tüketici Davranışı

1. INTRODUCTION

The two concepts, which have been recently put on the line, and which are considered to have the same meaning, have come to the forefront in terms of consumer behavior with great contribution to the changing marketing understanding of globalization. Neuromarketing and subliminal messages in creating consumer perception is seen as similar concepts. However, the common aspect of these two concepts is only the subconscious interaction. Apart from this, concepts are quite different from each other.

Observation of all the external stimuli (people, objects, smells, sounds, movements, tastes and colors) that are turned on and all sorts of sensory interaction that is formed by a subjective structure under the influence of

many experiences. In addition to perceiving with the five senses, he perceives a subliminal perception of a number of stimuli that people are not consciously aware of and are under the influence unwittingly.

The subliminal word, which originated in Latin and is formed by the combination of sub (lower) and limen (threshold) words, is usually used subconsciously or unconsciously. The unconscious, which can also be defined as the whole of mental activities that occur just below the consciousness, also serves as a depot where experiences and perceptions are stored for later recall and use. Subliminal perception can also be defined as the influence of some external stimuli on consciousness, emotion, or actions without awareness.

Neuromarketing is an interdisciplinary identity which is formed by entering into a joint study of marketing discipline and neuroscience in order to understand consumer perception and behaviors more clearly, to manage consumer selection, decision making and purchasing processes, product and brand perceptions and determination of attitude formation with this.

In this study, both concepts have been explained in depth and tried to explain the relations and differences between them. In the field of consumer behavior, it has a unique value in terms of being a conceptual study which is thought to contribute to marketing literature.

2. CONCEPTUAL VIEW OF NEURO MARKETING AND SUBLIMINAL PERCEPTION

The marketing 1.0 approach, which places goods, services and ideas at the center, has become a necessity for marketing 3.0 by emphasizing the value of the concept of the customer while moving towards the point of marketing 2.0 by taking the consumer's foreground. It emphasizes the presence of emotional marketing with the understanding of marketing 3.0 which is the foreground of personalization, human nature, spirit and integrity (Kotler, 2011:15-16).

Today, social media networks and communication, e-commerce, the social responsibility projects, etc. have entered into the marketing 4.0 period with the introduction of concepts such as our life and increasing importance of marketing. Marketing 4.0 focuses specifically on consumers' emotions and perception formation. At this point, the concept of neuro marketing is involved. Traditional marketing research is insufficient to explain purchasing behavior.

In order to access these details, the concept of neuro marketing emerged. Neuro-marketing is the application of the techniques used in neuro-science to consumers to learn the answers given to marketing stimuli of the human brain (Taş&Şeker, 2017: 12).

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Neuro marketing is a function that helps the consumer understand how they behave consciously or unconsciously, what influences them, and create the necessary marketing strategies on this. In other words, it is a science that quantifies the thoughts, perceptions, attitudes, and attitudes of the minds of the consumers with brief hearing, feelings, taste, smell and touch (Tuzel, 2010:164-165). Nevertheless, neuro marketing is perceived as a science field that helps marketing functions to businesses by researching responses to various stimuli, which are formed by emotional connections, other than rational thinking of the person (Yücel&Çubuk, 2013:174). Neuro marketing research, which explores the consumer mind that symbolizes every unknown and creates a black box image, has greatly excited marketing academics and practitioners over the last 10 years (Ural, 2008:421).

There are numerous and different definitions of neuromarketing, which focuses on consumer behavior in both individual and societal sense and is developed to explain them by analyzing them, while at the same time understanding how products react to branding and marketing communication activities.

Lee et al. (2007) neuro marketing; "The application of neuro-scientific methods in order to analyze all consumer behaviors related to the marketing activities and the mates in the market structure"(Lee et al., 2007: 201).

Neuro marketing should not be perceived as subliminal messages aimed at pushing this button because it is an area that tries to reach the path to the assumed purchasing button in the consumer's brain and to understand the consumer. Because, by finding this button in the consumer's brain, it is unethical to print it in a form that the consumer is unaware of (Ural, 2008:425).

Neuro marketing in the second half of the nineties, Prof. Harvard University for the first time. It started with Gerry Zaltman's use of functional magnetic resonance tomography (fMRI) in marketing research. fMRI is a

brain imaging method that is used to determine which regions are active in certain brain regions during certain movements or affects. The purpose of these studies is to determine which areas of the brain are active when deciding to buy an object that is the commercial value of the person (Uzbay, 2014: 47). Professor Ale Smidts is the researcher who first used the term neuro-marketing in 2002, thus enabling him to be included in the academic literature as a term (Fisher, 2014: 6).

Neuro marketing has developed considerably as a new field of science that scientifically measures how the brain works and how it decides to be the main target of marketing since the early 2000s. The techniques used have also expanded. Neuromarketing studies aim to understand the perception and approach components that occur in the subconscious of consumers by interpreting the physical reactions – in other words the physical and brain signals – of consumers. Through this method, it is attainable to capture and understand the correct target audience for businesses by creating their own perception maps and position their products more successfully in the minds of consumers. Therefore it is possible to utilise more than one tool during studies. The expertise lies with selecting the most appropriate tool, whether to measure brain signals, body reactions. Which ones are most commonly preferred?

The first technique that is used for brain signals is the fMRI (Functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging) technique that identifies movements occurring in the brains of individuals based on the level of oxygen in certain areas of the brain. With this technique, it can be observed at a speed as quick as a millionth of a second, that when purchasing activities are undertaken by consumers, an increased amount of blood accumulates at the areas of the brain coordinating these activities. Another technique that is used to measure brain activities and the rhythmic waves between neurons is the EEG (Electroencephalogram) technique. With this technique a measurement of unspoken emotional reactions of persons, psychological reactions to products can also be determined. A more advanced version of this technique, SST (Steady State Typograpy) – with its possibility to measure immediate reactions – allows for the real time recording of brain activities' reaction to any stimulant. PET (Positron Emission Tomography Device) is another technique that has lead to many developments in brain imaging, but is costly. This technique sheds light on which areas the cognitive activities of the brain take place. For example, it has been determined that the left frontal lobe of the brain is responsible for the coding of information that is to be retained for a long period of time and which is fairly detailed.

On the other hand, in order to interpret physical signals, techniques such as measuring eye movements, facial expressions, skin conductance and heart rhythm are utilised. One of the tools used for these purposes, the Galvanometer, aims to measure the electricity conductivity of the consumers' skin. With the galvanic skin reaction technique, as the sweating that is caused as a result of an emotional reaction and as the electric resistance of the skin increases, the increase in excitement and interest can also be observed. Similarly, with the eye tracking technique, the observation of the changes to the iris and the determination of what it is focusing on, the level of interest in the product can be determined.

Biometric and neuroimaging are the two techniques that try to perceive by analyzing the consumer. Biometric measurements measure the response of consumers to sensations that are not physiologically controlled. Examples are eye tracking, skin conductivity, face reading devices. In brain imaging techniques, attempts are made to analyze responses in the minds of external stimuli and in the depths of the mind. For example, devices such as fMRI, EEG, PET scan can be given (Giray&Girişken, 2013: 611).

Neuro marketing can create many different benefits in marketing. Among these is the provision of the consumer's measurement of the trust and loyalty of the products and the firm. However, it is also important to understand the psychology of consumers against product prices, to determine the effects of store atmosphere, and to understand the effects of advertising and packaging designs on purchasing (Ural, 2008:427-428).

Although it creates a menacing perception when viewed as a marketing approach to consumer consciousness, neuro marketing research; can be characterized as a strategic approach that will create significant advantages in the field of marketing and consumer purchasing behaviors in strategic issues such as brand value, preference frequency, awareness (Akgün&Ergün,2016: 11-12).

Hundreds of experiments conducted over the last 85 years have established that people are influenced by certain latent information in the advertisements. This phenomenon is known as "subliminal perception" and has been popularized in science fiction stories (Sofi&Nika, 2013:17). Subliminal perception (SP) is today considered a well-supported theory stating that perception can occur without conscious awareness and have a significant impact on later behaviour and thought (Ramsøy & Overgaard,2004:2).

Consciousness, defined as the state of being able to know, understand and comprehend oneself, is a concept that includes the ability to perceive, feel and react to various stimuli in the environment in which one is living and continues. Taking the model of human behavior as a model, consciousness as a physical function is explained that it can occur in various changes (Carlson, 2014: 3).

The process of accepting a number of stimuli from the outside world, physical and cognitive, is defined as perception. In this process, involving conscious stimuli, the necessary information is passed through a filter and sent to the memory in the unconscious. These stimuli, which are sent to memory outside of conscious perception, are not easily forgettable or disappearable. It is like a stored mechanism (İzgören,2006: 19). The brain is a perception, not by making a conclusion from the relations between the parts but by deduction. This concerns the simultaneous grip.

The subliminal message is a concept that aims to direct the formation of perception in the consumer through various communication channels, addressing the spiritual part under the threshold of consciousness. In other words, it is the messages that are not consciously informed by one's sensory organs (Tıǧlı, 2002:356).

Subliminal messages and advertisements, which are known as a forgotten episode in the brain, are intended to affect personal emotions, thoughts and behaviors (Darıcı, 2015: 188). The feeling that the self is the consumer of an action is derived in part from basic physiological systems of the body. One knows one is doing something by virtue of interoceptive sensations of the body's movement that occur both before and after action (Dijksterhuis, et al., 2007:2).

Subliminal messages are made with a variety of techniques that are well below consumer perception thresholds. It is desirable to make changes in consumers' purchasing behavior, product and brand attitudes with very accelerated images or sound levels at very low density (Şahin&Keskin, 2016: 51-52). From this point, the way in which the subliminal messages are made is visual and sound as follows:

- ✓ Visually;
 - Tachistoscopic Imagery: These images are flash movie frames or images that are sudden and very fast, which the eye can not catch at a normal time.
 - Visual Closures: Various images hidden between movie frames or images.
- ✓ As Sound;
 - Fone Concealed: Sounds that are hidden in the backgrounds of speech or music in movies or videos.
 - Under the Hearing: The stimuli that are under the threshold of the brain's sensation
 - Accelerated: These are very fast-spinning messages that the brain can not consciously resolve but are intended to settle under the subconscious

Subliminal messages also include famous use or popular mascots and characters (Lindstorm, 2012:154).

Subliminal messages are mainly used for sex, death or sexuality. Many businesses are targeting subliminal messages using visual and audible messages related to the essential element of sexuality, thereby attracting the consumer. Subliminal messages are used in the same sense as neuro marketing because they try to influence consciousness and perception by using external stimuli. The main reason for this complexity is the subject of consciousness. Explaining the functional status of subconscious advertising is important in determining the differences between these two conceptual fields. In subconscious advertising, these stimuli are defined as an effort to persuade the consumer in a secret way, reducing it to a level that the consumer can not perceive. Neuro marketing does not have such an effort. In this sense, neuro marketing never enters into a secret conviction effort. Neuro marketing refers to how these stimuli affect the brain and how they affect the decision to buy. Subconscious advertising; While sending the mission to send a secret message, Neuro measures the effects of marketing stimuli. While the message is hidden in subconscious advertising; Messages are clearly highlighted in advertising work that is guided by neuro marketing research (Yücel&Çubuk, 2013:175-178).

Neuro marketing is a scientific discipline that researches how the human brain works and how it determines and makes them available for marketing. The subliminal message is marketing communication efforts aimed at changing consumers' perceptions by targeting the consciousness threshold, which affects the consumer's brain.

3. CONCLUSION

The widespread use of subliminal messages forms the basis of concerns about neuro marketing. Consumers who think that their movements will be controlled with a specific message, with their brain washable, are concerned about any research on the brain. However, subliminal advertising has its own methods, unlike neuro marketing. Subliminal advertisements are in an effort to unwittingly affect the consumer by hosting a set of visual, audio, and sensory stimuli in the invisible part of the iceberg. Neuro marketing, on the other hand, is a science that investigates how consumers are directed to products or brands, rather than trying to direct them with such secret stimuli.

The common point of the two is seen as studies on the brain, but one is done to influence one and the other to make it clear why it is affected. Due to the fact that neuroimaging techniques used in neuro marketing have just recently been understood and the development is obvious, it is not possible to clearly distinguish the difference with subliminal advertising perception. However, the occurrence of ethical concerns of the subliminal population emphasizes the need for clarifying the purpose of neuro marketing.

Today, many businesses allocate more than \$ 300 billion a year to a multitude of marketing activities such as advertising, promotions, packaging, and slogans. However, it is difficult to predict how much of these activities work. Neuro marketing techniques, which are aimed at understanding consumer behavior and analyzing perception formation in a number of marketing researches, such as advertising research, consumer experience research, new media research, packaging, logo and emblem research, and public perception research.

Businesses can respond to all their needs and expectations much more easily by clearly understanding the concept of neuro marketing and by analyzing the consumer thoroughly. They can, however, achieve success in long-term marketing strategies by understanding different expectations or creating new market areas. Within the context of changing marketing, businesses can increase the sustainability of both themselves and their products, especially in the context of relational marketing, identifying consumer needs, personalizing products, and so on.

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