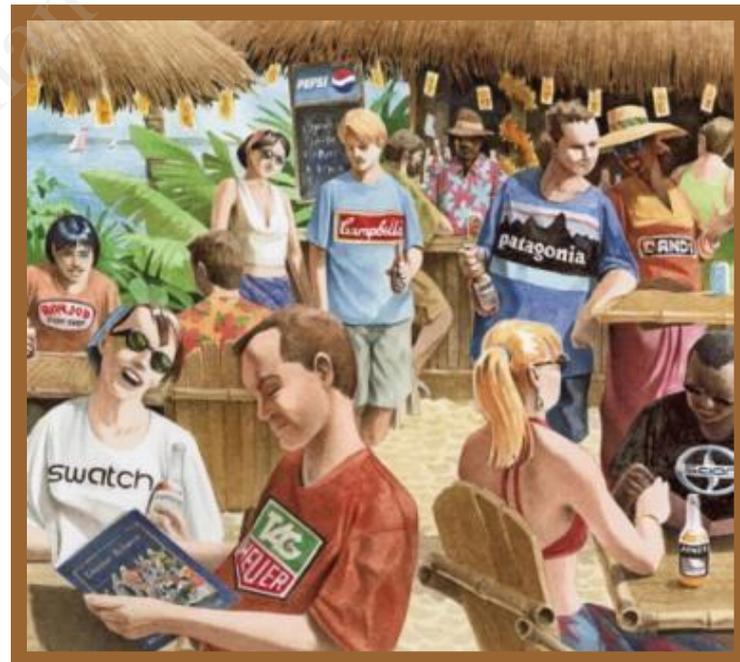


## Chapter 2

# Perception

**CONSUMER  
BEHAVIOR, 8e  
Michael Solomon**



# Learning Objectives

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When you finish this chapter you should understand why:

- Perception is a three-stage process that translates raw stimuli into meaning.
- Products and commercial messages often appeal to our senses, but we won't be influenced by most of them.
- The design of a product today is a key driver of its success or failure.
- Subliminal advertising is a controversial—but largely ineffective—way to talk to consumers.

# Learning Objectives (Cont'd)

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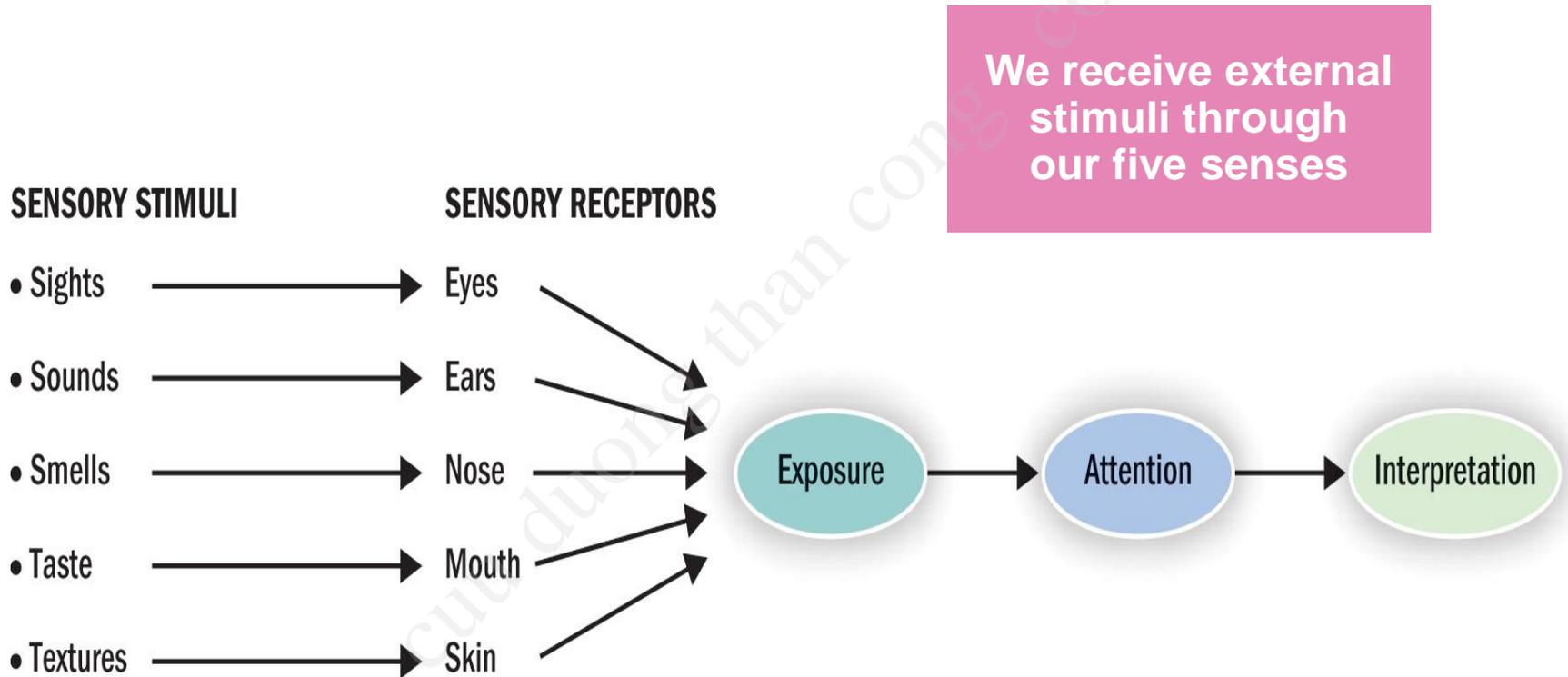
- We interpret the stimuli to which we do pay attention according to learned patterns and expectations.
- The science of semiotics helps us to understand how marketers use symbols to create meaning.

# Sensation and Perception

- Sensation is the immediate response of our sensory receptors (eyes, ears, nose, mouth, and fingers) to basic stimuli (light, color, sound, odor, and texture).
- Perception is the process by which sensations are selected, organized, and interpreted.



# The Process of Perception



# Advertisements Appeal to Our Sensory Systems

**You Might Expect A Luxury Sedan To Cater To Your Senses. But All Six Of Them?**



it comes standard with every Lexus ES 300. Let us explain. Have you ever been in a new place and felt like you had been there before? Some call it *déjà vu*, but we call it ergonomics: the uncanny ability of our cabin to have everything in exactly the place you would most likely want it. So whether it's the knob for the climate control system or the switch for the power window or the buttons for the optional six-disc CD auto-changer, or whatever – the first time you reach for it, the very first time, it will be there, as if you had placed it there yourself. Kind of spooky. Of course, we also do a lot for your other senses: the look of a sleek, aerodynamic body, the feel of gentle lumbar support, the smell of available handcrafted leather upholstery, and the soothing sound of eight strategically placed speakers. As for taste, it's in everything we do. Figuratively speaking, of course.

The sixth sense is a keen, highly intuitive power – a power of perception – that goes far beyond the five senses. That's according to the dictionary. According to our engineers,

**LEXUS**  
The Relentless Pursuit Of Perfection.

- This ad for a luxury car emphasizes the contribution made by all of our senses to the evaluation of a driving experience.

Consumer Behavior

# Sensory Systems



Our world is a symphony of colors, sounds, odors, tastes, etc.

- Marketers contribute to the commotion
- Advertisements, product packages, radio and TV commercials, billboards provide sensations

# Hedonic Consumption

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- Hedonic consumption: multisensory, fantasy, and emotional aspects of consumers' interactions with products
- Marketers use impact of sensations on consumers' product experiences



# Vision

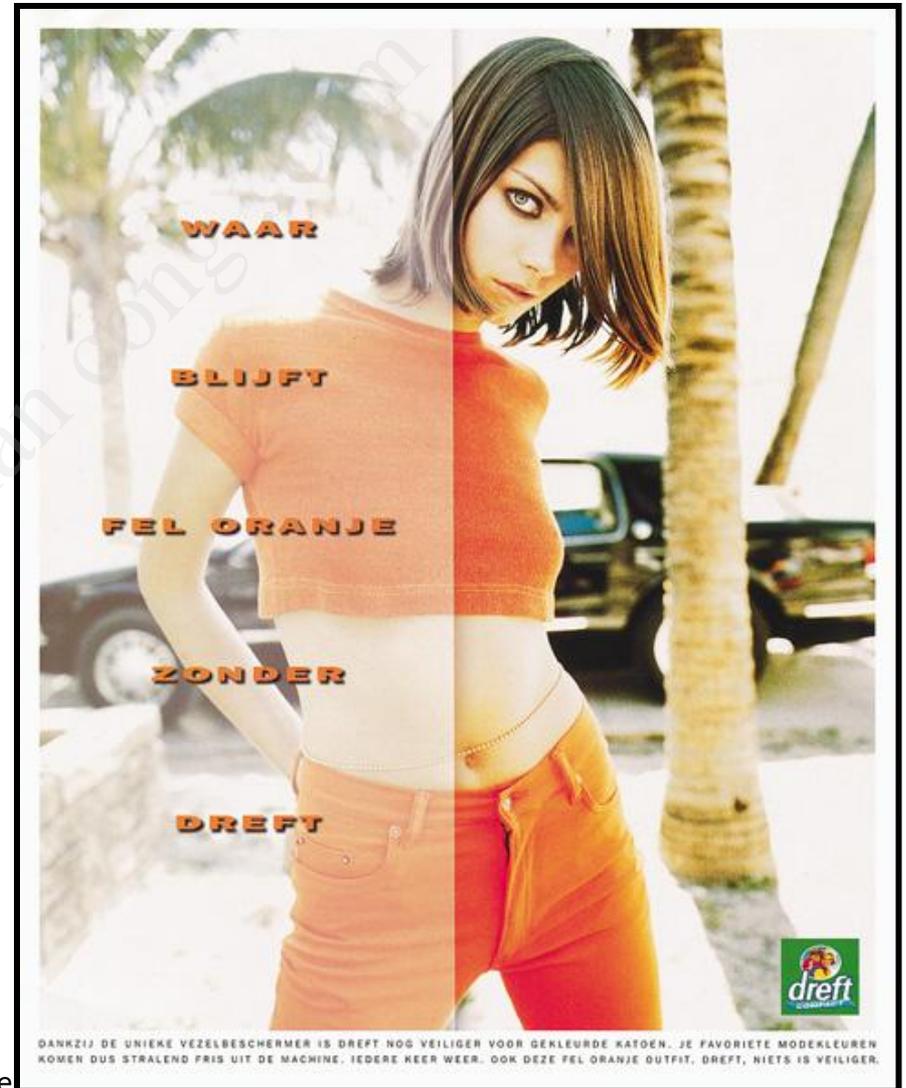


## Color

- Color provokes emotion
- Reactions to color are biological and cultural
- Color in the United States is becoming brighter and more complex
- Trade dress: colors associated with specific companies

# Perceptions of Color

- As this Dutch detergent ad demonstrates (Flowery orange fades without Dreft), vivid colors are often an attractive product feature.

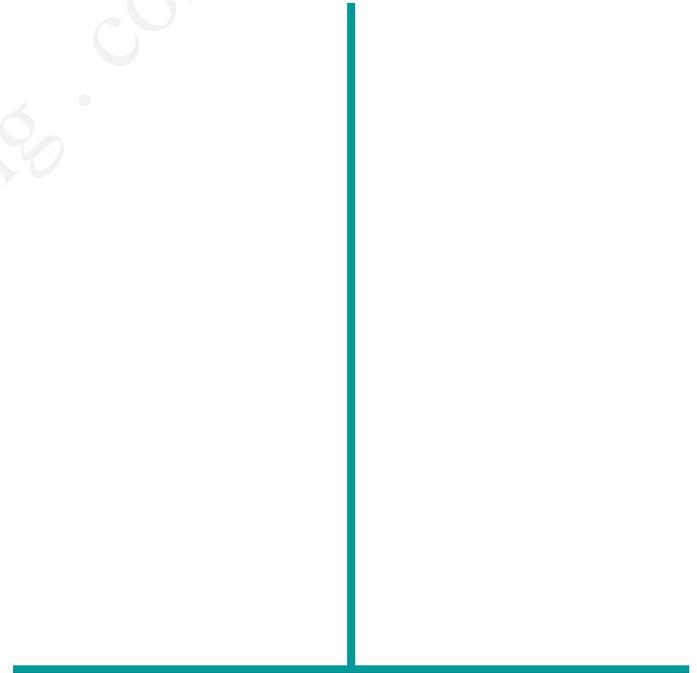


Consumer

# Vertical-Horizontal Illusion

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- Which line is longer: horizontal or vertical?
- If you're given two 24 oz. glasses, you will pour more into the shorter, wider glass than the taller glass because you focus more on height than width
- Answer: both lines are same length



# Smell

---



Odors create mood and promote memories:

- Coffee = childhood, home
- Cinnamon buns = sex

Marketers use scents:

- Inside products
- In promotions (e.g., scratch 'n sniff)
- In Smellavision

# Smell in Advertising



- This ad pokes fun at the proliferation of scented ads. Ah, the scent of sweat.

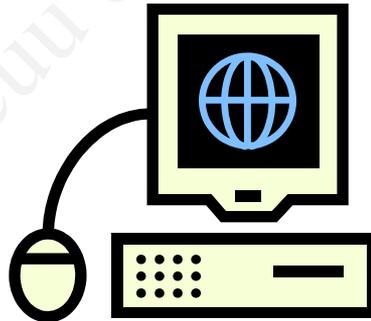
Behavior

# Hearing

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Sound affects people's feelings and behaviors

- Phonemes: individual sounds that might be more or less preferred by consumers
  - Example: “i” brands are “lighter” than “a” brands
- Muzak uses sound and music to create mood
  - High tempo = more stimulation
  - Slower tempo = more relaxing



← [Click for Muzak.com](https://www.muzak.com)

# Stimulus Progression

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File Edit View Favorites Tools Help

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Internet



# Touch

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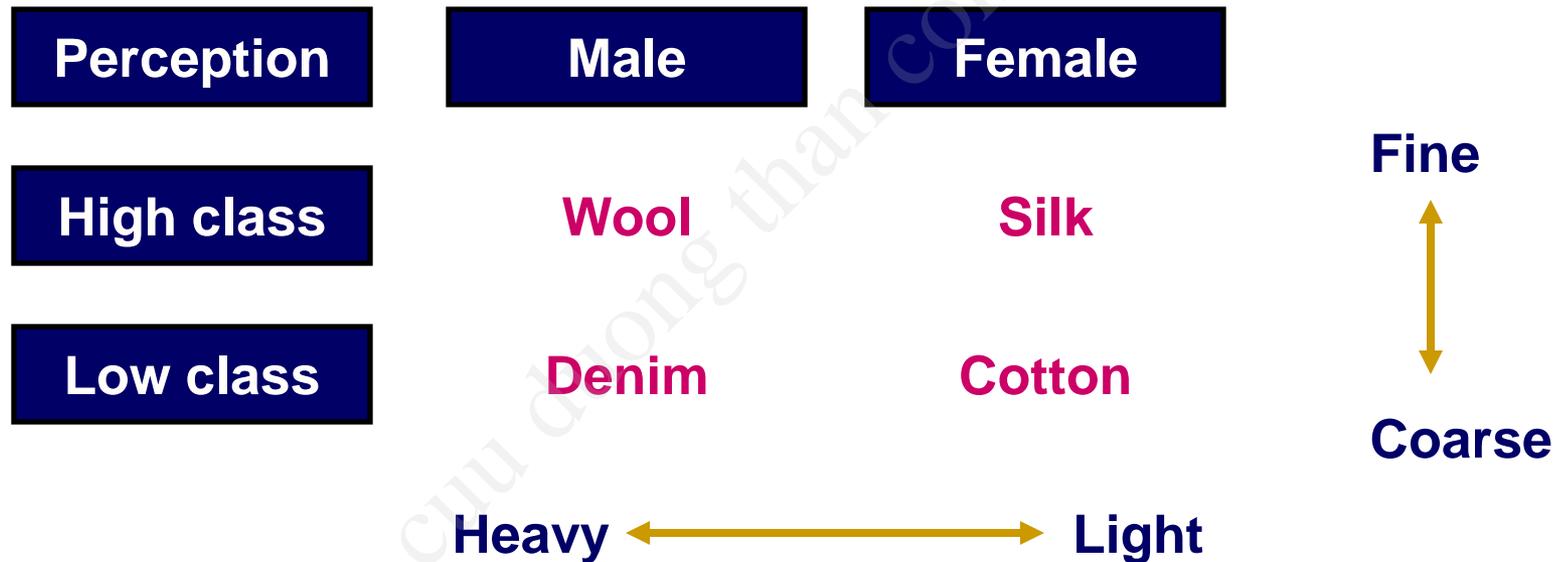
- Haptic senses—or “touch”—is the most basic of senses; we learn this before vision and smell
- Haptic senses affect product experience and judgment
- Kansei engineering: Japanese philosophy that translates customers’ feelings into design elements
- Marketers that use touch: perfume companies, car makers

# Applications of Touch Perceptions

- *Kansai engineering*: A philosophy that translates customers' feelings into design elements.
- Mazda Miata designers discovered that making the stick shift (shown on the right) exactly 9.5 cm long conveys the optimal feeling of sportiness and control.



# Sensory Marketing: Using Touch



# Taste

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- Flavor houses develop new concoctions for consumer palates
- Cultural changes determine desirable tastes
- Example: heat of peppers is measured in units called Scovilles



# Exposure

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- Exposure occurs when a stimulus comes within range of someone's sensory receptors
- We can concentrate, ignore, or completely miss stimuli
- Example: Cadillac goes from zero to 60 mph in 5 seconds—as shown in a 5-second commercial



# Sensory Thresholds

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- Psychophysics: science that focuses on how the physical environment is integrated into our personal, subjective world
- Absolute threshold: the minimum amount of stimulation that can be detected on a given sensory channel

# Sensory Thresholds



- Differential threshold: ability of a sensory system to detect changes or differences between two stimuli
  - Minimum difference between two stimuli is the j.n.d. (just noticeable difference)
- Example: packaging updates must be subtle enough over time to keep current customers

# Sensory Thresholds (cont.)

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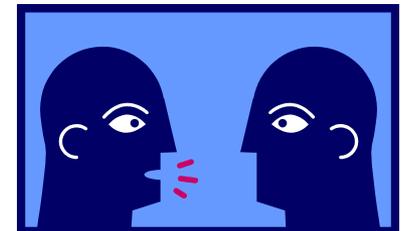
- Differential thresholds used in pricing strategies:
  - Behavioral pricing: price is information cue that is perceived and interpreted
    - High price = high quality
  - Reference price: price against which buyers compare the actual selling price
    - Original price versus sale price
- Government regulations must protect consumers against deceptive pricing

# Discussion

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*Discussion: many studies have shown that our sensory detection abilities decline as we grow older. The largest demographic market in the United States—baby boomers—is hitting the age at which sensory detection is becoming more and more difficult.*

- *What products or brands consider this declining ability among baby boomers?*
- *What benefits and features do these products promote to appeal to this large target market?*



# Subliminal Perception

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- Subliminal perception: occurs when stimulus is below the level of the consumer's awareness.
- Rumors of subliminal advertising are rampant— though there's little proof that it occurs.
- Most researchers believe that subliminal techniques are not of much use in marketing.

# Subliminal Techniques

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- Subliminal techniques
  - Embeds: figures that are inserted into magazine advertising by using high-speed photography or airbrushing.
  - Subliminal auditory perception: sounds, music, or voice text inserted into advertising.

# Discussion

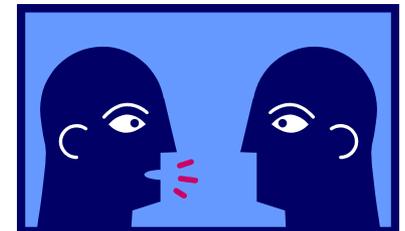
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*Review the ad below*

- *To whom is the ad targeted?*
- *Are there any subliminal messages in the ad? If so, what are they?*
- *Do you believe these messages are harmful or manipulative? Why or why not?*



Hoang Duc Binh, MBA, 2008



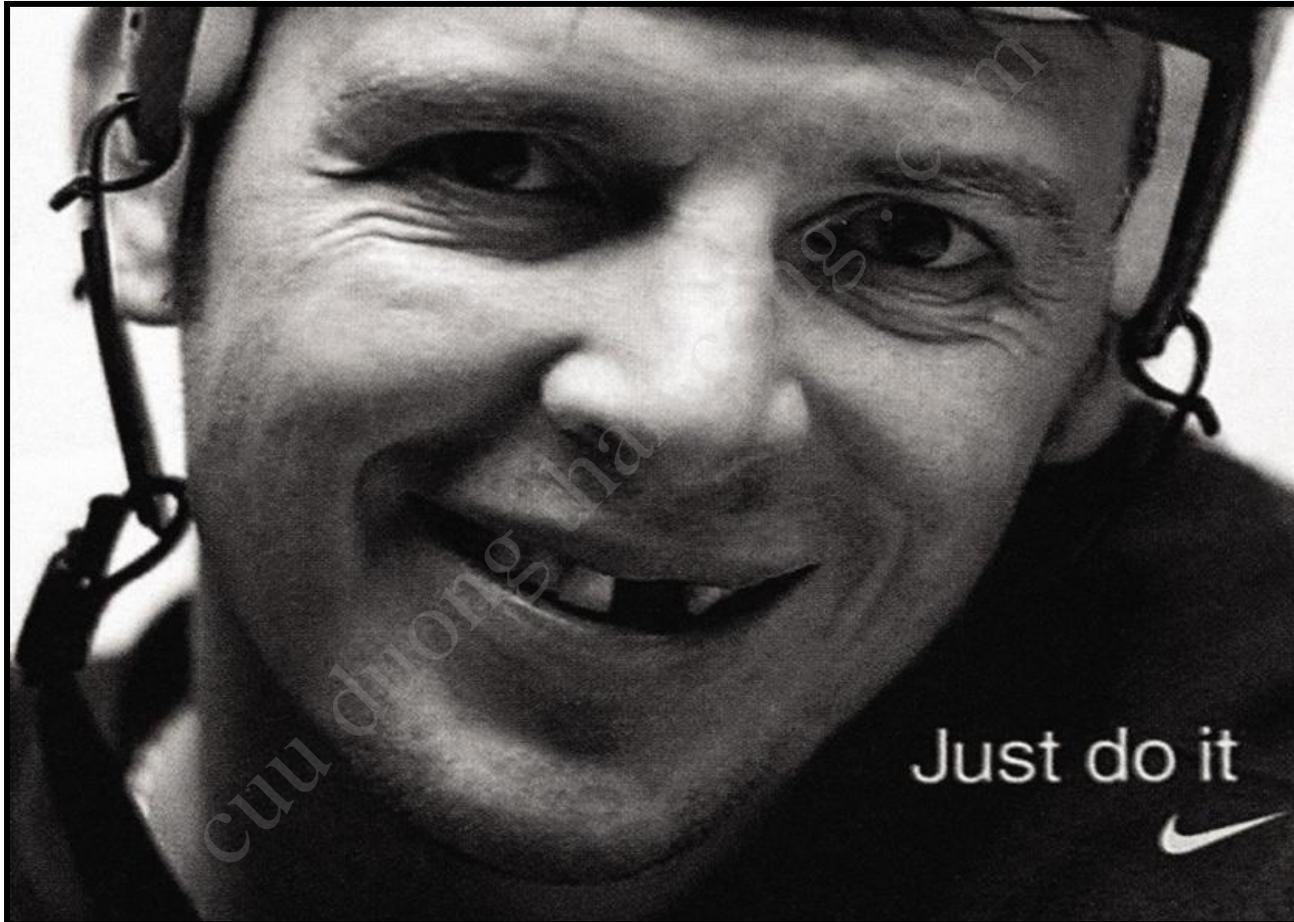
# Attention

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Attention: extent to which processing activity is devoted to a particular stimulus

- Competition for our attention
  - 3,500 ad info pieces per day
  - Sensory overload: consumers exposed to far more information than they can process
- Younger consumers can multitask—process information from more than one medium at a time
- Marketers need to break through the clutter

# Attention and Advertising



- **Nike tries to cut through the clutter by spotlighting maimed athletes instead of handsome models.**

Consumer Behavior

## Attention (cont.)

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How some marketers break through the clutter:

- Networks wedging original content into the blocks of advertising time
- The CW runs *content wraps*, which mix sponsors' products into program snippets
- Online advertisers use rich media, where elements of the ad surprise you with movement
- Others do something outrageous or unusual in public places

# Personal Selection

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- Perceptual selection: people attend to only a small portion of the stimuli to which they are exposed
- Personal selection factors:

**Perceptual vigilance**

**Perceptual defense**

**Adaptation**

## Personal Selection (cont.)

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- Perceptual vigilance: consumers are more likely to be aware of stimuli that relate to their current needs
  - Example: you're in the market for a car—so you tend to notice car ads more than before
- Perceptual defense: people see what they want to see—and don't see what they don't want to see
  - Example: heavy smoker may block out images of cancer-scarred lungs

# Personal Selection (cont.)

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- Adaptation: the degree to which consumers continue to notice a stimulus over time
- Factors leading to adaptation:

**Intensity**

**Duration**

**Discrimination**

**Exposure**

**Relevance**

# Stimulus Selection Factors

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- We are more likely to notice stimuli that differ from others around them
- So, marketers can create “contrast” through:



- *Interpretation*: the meaning that we assign to sensory stimuli
  - Meaning we assign to stimulus is called *schema*
  - Through *priming*, certain properties of a stimulus evoke a schema

# Stimulus Organization

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- We interpret sensations to others already in memory
- *Gestalt*: the whole is greater than the sum of its parts
- Explains how stimuli are organized:
  - Closure: people perceive an incomplete picture as complete
  - Similarity: consumers group together objects that share similar physical characteristics
  - Figure-ground: one part of the stimulus will dominate (the figure) while the other parts recede into the background (ground)

# Gestalt Principle



- This Swedish ad relies upon *gestalt* perceptual principles to insure that the perceiver organizes a lot of separate images into a familiar image. Consumer Behavior

# Principle of Closure



**L**ike yur bain, the nw Land Rover automoticly adjusts to anything.

**Introducing the most technologically advanced Land Rover ever.**  
When it came to creating the all-new Discovery Series II, we didn't leave anything out. Whether you're looking under the hood or around the cabin, you'll find something new.  
Or something improved.

Or something reengineered. Or something redesigned. You'll even come across technological innovations not found in other SUVs. Like the newly available Active Cornering Enhancement. A feature that uses computer software and an advanced hydraulic system to create an extraordinarily smooth SUV-like ride. Even in turns as sharp as *this*.

Suffice it to say that there's not a more streetwise 4x4. But what are brains without brawn? Thanks to four-wheel electronic traction control, all-terrain ABS, and permanent four-wheel drive, there's almost no off-road problem the new Discovery can't solve. We've even rethought its braking system. It now comes equipped with

electronic brake force distribution. A feature that is designed to balance front and rear braking for increased driver control. In all conditions. And while the new Discovery adjusts to practically anything outside, no adjustments are necessary inside. Its large interior caters to you and your family with such conveniences as ergonomically designed seats,

three-point safety belts for everyone, and optional forward-facing rear seats.

Moreover, this new Land helps put your mind at ease with side-impact beams and 14-gauge steel chassis. So call 1-800-FINE 4WD local retailer. And with a starting MSRP of \$34,775\* there's one thing you won't be doing: Thinking twice.

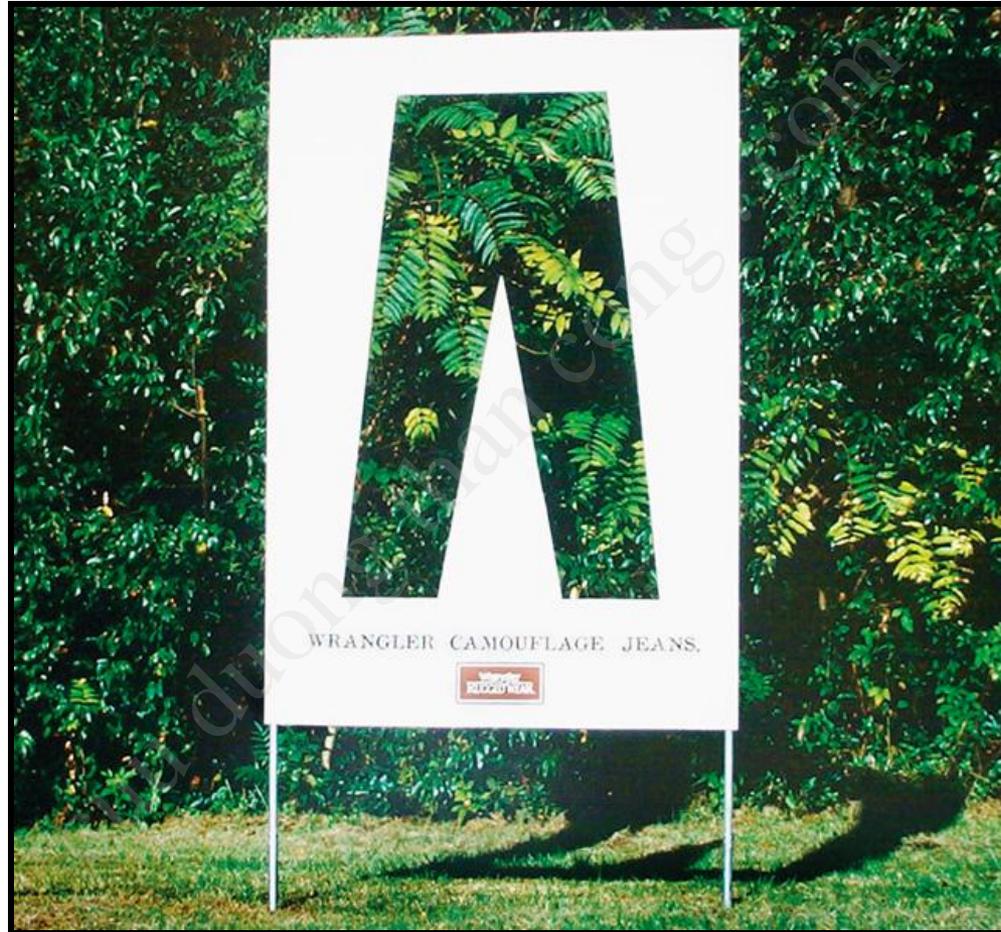
**DISCOVERY SERIES II \$34,775\***

Always use your seatbelts. 2002 airbags above do not provide sufficient protection.

- This Land Rover ad illustrates the use of the principle of closure, in which people participate in the ad by mentally filling in the gaps in the sentence.

Consumer Behavior

# Figure-ground Principle



- This billboard for Wrangler jeans makes creative use of the *figure-ground principle*.

Consumer Behavior

# Interpretational Biases

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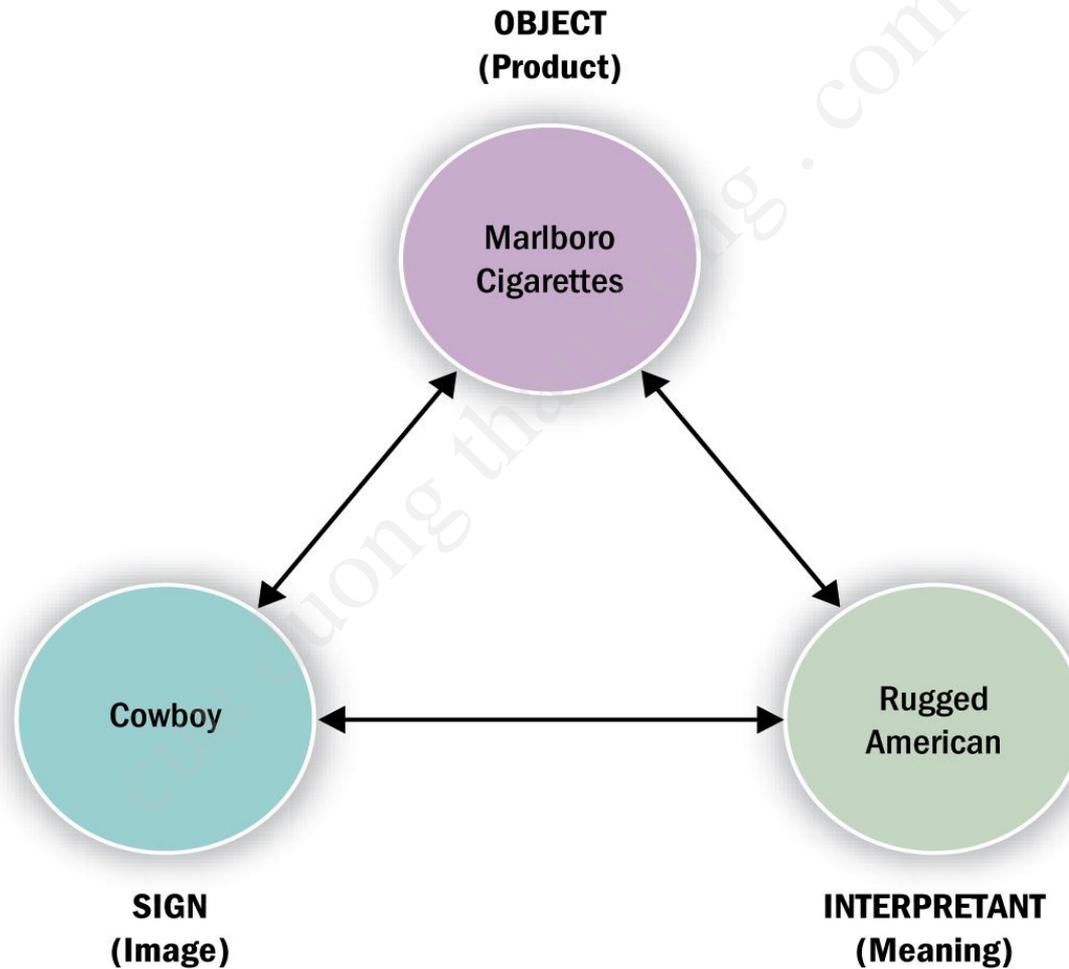
- We interpret ambiguous stimuli based on our experiences, expectations, and needs
  - Princeton versus Dartmouth football game
  - Planters Fresh Roast (vacuum-packed peanuts package)

# Semiotics

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- Semiotics: correspondence between signs and symbols and their role in the assignment of meaning
- Marketing messages have three basic components:
  - Object: product that is the focus of the message
  - Sign: sensory image that represents the intended meanings of the object
  - Interpretant: meaning derived

# Semiotic Relationships



# Semiotics (cont.)

- Signs are related to objects in three ways:

## ICON

Sign that resembles the product in some way

**Example:**  
Ford Mustang galloping horse

## INDEX

Sign that is connected to a product because they share some property

**Example:**  
Pine tree in Spic 'n Span = fresh

## SYMBOL

Sign that relates to a product by either conventional or agreed-upon associations

**Example:**  
Lion = fearlessness

# Semiotics (cont.)

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*Hyperreality*: process of making real what is initially simulation or hype.

- Marlboro man = American frontier spirit
- Heidi-land = Switzerland

# Perceptual Positioning

- Brand perceptions = functional attributes + symbolic attributes
- Perceptual map: map of where brands are perceived in consumers' minds
  - Used to determine how brands are currently perceived to determine future positioning

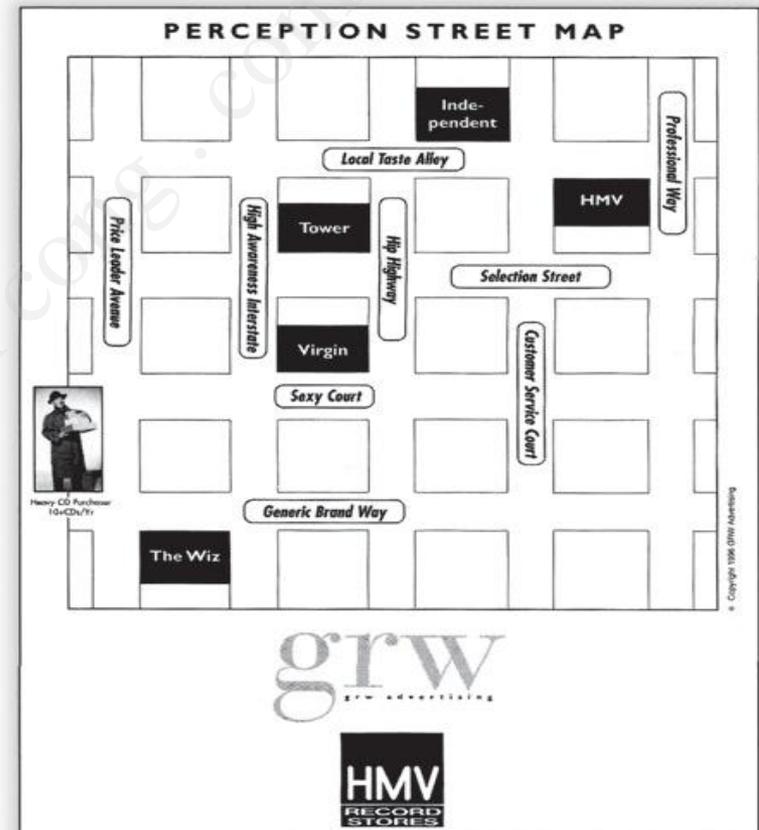


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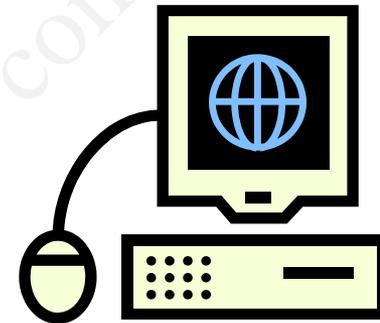
# Positioning Strategy

- *Positioning strategy*: marketing mix elements that influence the consumer's perception of a brand
- Examples of brand positioning:

<b>Lifestyle</b>	<b>Grey Poupon is “high class”</b>
<b>Price leadership</b>	<b>Southwest Airlines “no frills”</b>
<b>Attributes</b>	<b>Bounty is “quicker picker upper”</b>
<b>Product class</b>	<b>Mazda Miata is sporty convertible</b>
<b>Competitors</b>	<b>Northwestern Insurance is the “quiet company”</b>
<b>Occasions</b>	<b>Wrigley’s gum used when smoking not permitted</b>
<b>Users</b>	<b>Levi’s Dockers targeted to men in 20s and 30s</b>
<b>Quality</b>	<b>At Ford, “Quality is Job 1”</b>

# Discussion

- *American Express has a strong brand identity but suffered from negative consumer perceptions in the past*
- *After viewing the video, summarize how American Express changed consumer perceptions to increase sales*
- *How did Amex reach younger consumers?*



↑ **Click to view  
Quicktime  
video on  
American Express's  
repositioning**

