Chapter 6
The Self

CONSUMER BEHAVIOR, 8e
Michael Solomon

Chapter Objectives

When you finish this chapter you should understand why:

- **The self-concept strongly influences consumer behavior.**

- **Products often play a pivotal role in defining the self-concept.**

- **Sex-role identity is different from gender, and society's expectations of masculinity and femininity help to determine the products we buy to be consistent with these expectations.**

Hoang Duc Binh, 2008

Chapter Objectives

When you finish this chapter you should understand why:

- **A person's sex-role identity is a major component of self-definition. The media plays a key role in teaching us how to behave as "proper" males and females.**

- **The way we think about our bodies (and the way our culture tells us we should think) is a key component of self-esteem.**

Hoang Duc Binh, 2008

Perspectives on the Self

- **We buy products to highlight/hide aspects of the self**

- **Eastern cultures focus on:**
    - **The collective self (person's identity comes from group)**
    - **The interdependent self (person's identity defined from relationships with others)**

- **Western cultures focus on:**
    - **Individuality**
   - **Individual appearance**

Hoang Duc Binh, 2008

Self-Concept

- **Self-concept: the beliefs a person holds about his/her own attributes, and how he/she evaluates these qualities**

- **Attribute dimensions: content (facial attractiveness versus mental attitude) , positivity (self-esteem), intensity, stability over time, and accuracy (the degree to which one's self-assessment corresponds to reality)**


Hoang Duc Binh, 2008

Self-Esteem

- **Self-esteem: the positivity of a person's self-concept**
  - **Low self-esteem: think they will not perform well**
  - **High self-esteem: think they will be successful and will take risks**
- **Ads can trigger social comparison**
  - **Attractive models using products**
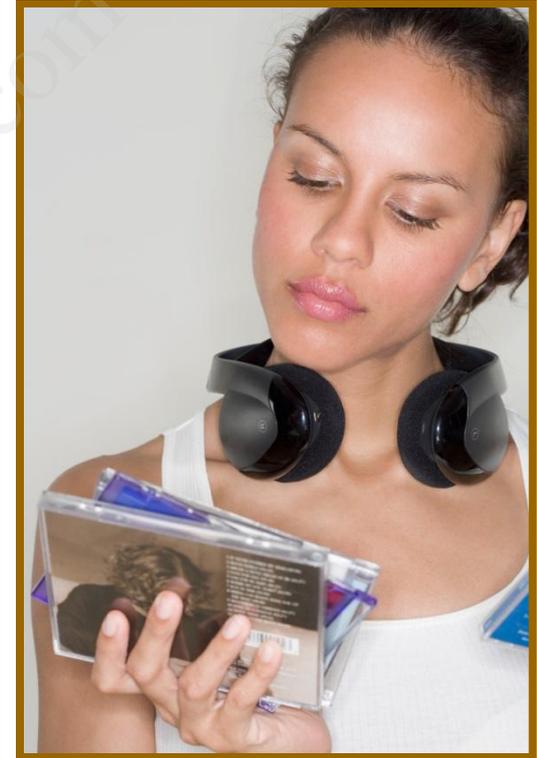
⇧**Click photo for Hotornot.com**

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Discussion

- *Self-esteem advertising: products provide remedy to low self-esteem*

- *Think about/locate examples of self-esteem advertising*

- *Evaluate the probable effectiveness of these appeals. Is it true that "flattery gets you everywhere?"*
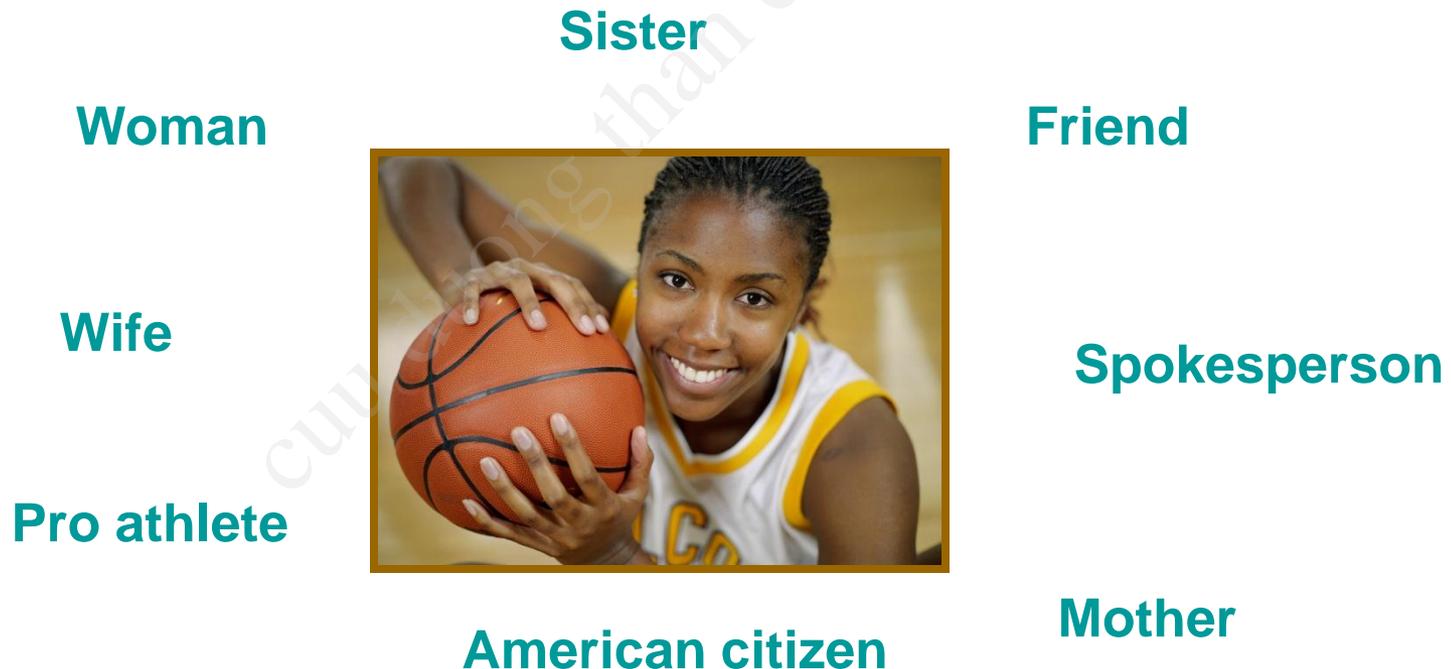
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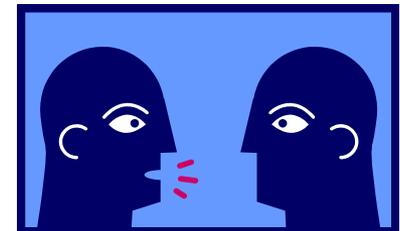
Real and Ideal Selves

- **Ideal self: our conception of how we would like to be**

- **Actual self: our more realistic appraisal of the qualities we have**

- **Products can:**
  - **Help us reach ideal self**
  - **Be consistent with actual self**

Hoang Duc Binh, 2008

Multiple Selves

- **Each of us has many selves and roles**

- **Marketers pitch products needed to facilitate an active role identities**

Sister

Woman

Friend

Wife

Spokesperson

Pro athlete

Mother

American citizen

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Virtual Identity

- **People are assuming virtual identities in cyberspace**

- **Avatars represent visual identity**

- **How do online "selves" affect consumer behavior?**

←**Click photo for secondlife.com**

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Symbolic Interactionism

- **Symbolic interactionism: relationships with others play a large part in forming the self**

- **"Who am I in this situation?"**

- **"Who do other people think I am?"**

- **We pattern our behavior on the perceived expectation of others—a self-fulfilling prophecy**

Hoang Duc Binh, 2008

Looking-Glass Self

- **Looking-glass self: taking the role of the other**

- **We take readings of our own identity by "bouncing" signals off others and trying to project what impression they have of us**


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Self-Consciousness

- **Self-consciousness: awareness of self**

- **Researchers say that those who score high in:**
  - **Public self-consciousness are more interested in clothing and use more cosmetics**
  - **Self-monitoring are attuned to how they present themselves in social environments**

Hoang Duc Binh, 2008

Consumption and Self-Concept

- **Identity marketing: consumers alter some aspects of their selves to advertise for a branded product**

- **Product consumption = definition of the self**
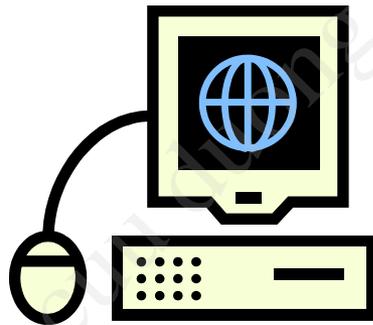
 ←Click to play Quicktime video on Harley-Davidson

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Discussion

- *Construct a "consumption biography" of a friend, family member, or classmate.*

- *Make a list of his/her most favorite possessions, and see if you or others can describe this person's personality just from the information provided by this catalogue.*

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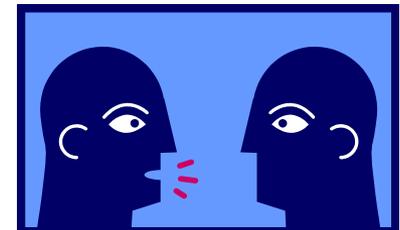
You Are What You Consume

- **Social identity as individual consumption behaviors**
  - **Question: Who am I now?**
  - **Answer: To some extent, your possessions!**
- **Inference of personality based on consumption patterns**
- **Consumers may attach themselves to product to maintain self-concept**
- **Symbolic self-completion theory: people who have an incomplete self-definition complete the identity by acquiring and displaying symbols associated with it.**

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Self/Product Congruence

- **Consumers demonstrate their values through their purchase behavior**

- **Self-image congruence models: we choose products when attributes matches the self**

Product Usage = **Self-Image**
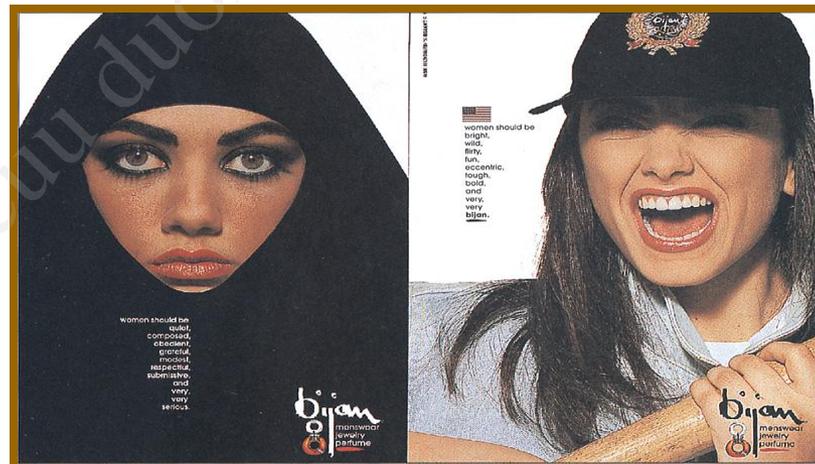
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The Extended Self

- **Extended self: external objects that we consider a part of us**

- **Levels of extended self:**
  - **Individual: personal possessions (cars, clothing)**
  - **Family: residence and furnishings**
  - **Community: neighborhood or town where you live**
  - **Group: social or other groups**

FRANCESCO**BIASIA**
HANDBAGS

Hoang Duc Binh, 2008

Gender Differences in Socialization

- **Gender roles vary by culture but are changing**

- **Many societies still expect traditional roles:**
  - **Agenic roles: men are expected to be assertive and have certain skills**
 - **Communal roles: women are taught to foster harmonious relationships**

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Sex-Typed Traits and Sex-Typed Products

- **Sex-typed traits: characteristics we stereotypically associate with one gender or the other.**

- **Sex-types products: take on masculine or feminine attributes**
  - **Pink Princess telephones**
  - **Thor's Hammer vodka**

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Androgyny

- **Androgyny: possession of both masculine and feminine traits**
  - **Androgynous people function well in social situations**
- **Sex-typed people: stereotypically masculine or feminine**
  - **Females more sensitive to pieces of info**
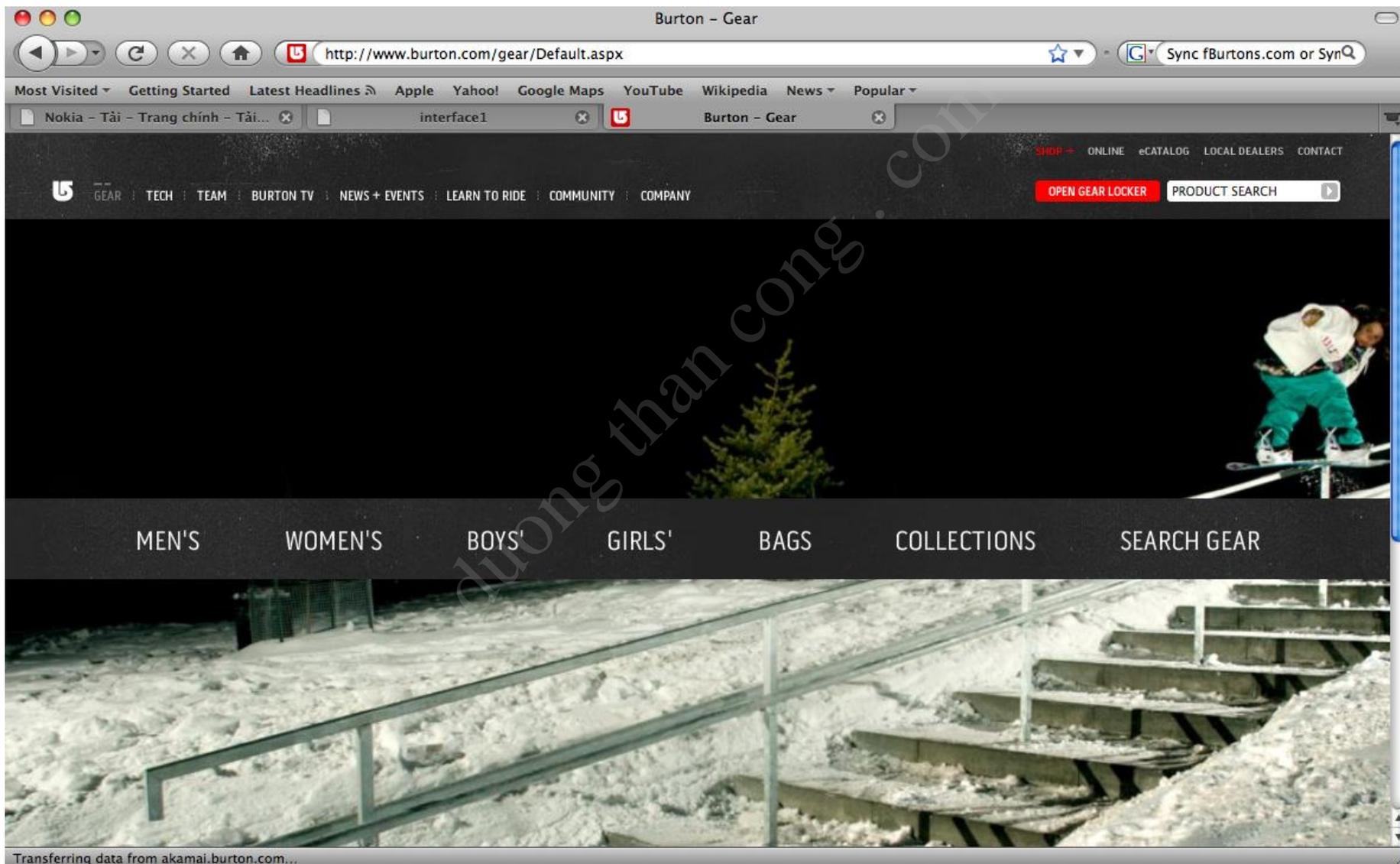 - **Men consider overall themes**

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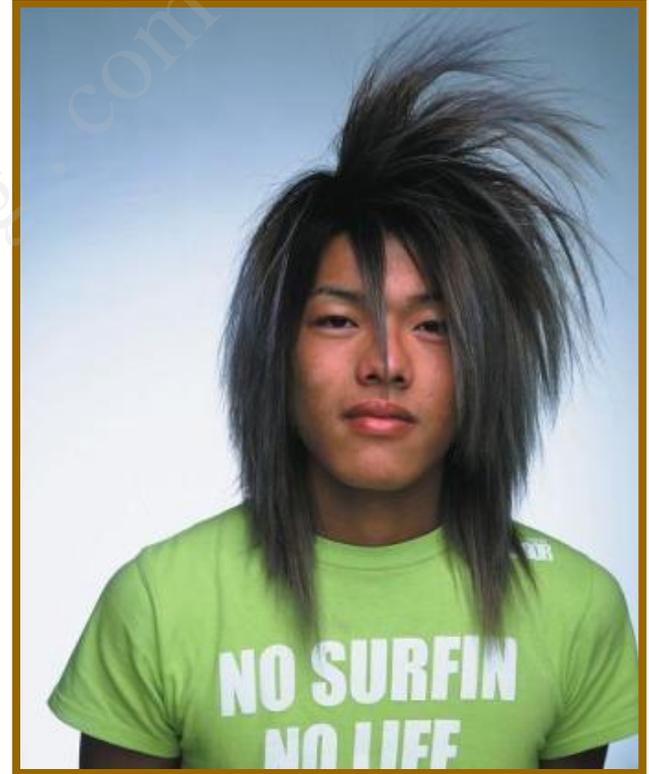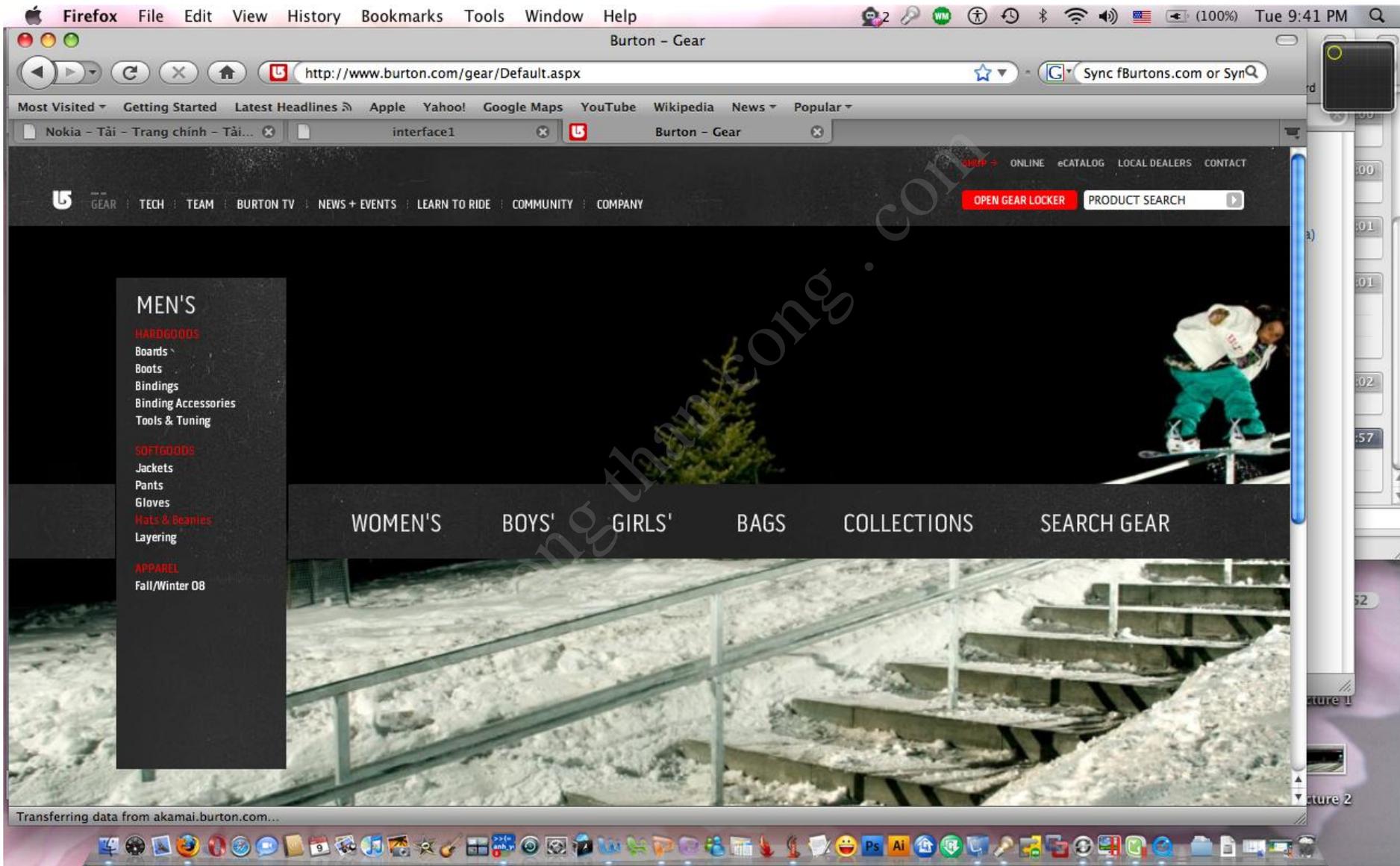
Female Sex Roles

⇧**Click photo for Burtons.com**

- **New managerial class of women has forced marketers to reexamine strategies**

- **Sporting goods, car accessories, and electronics products targeted to women**

- **Example: Burton's shoots photos of their female models to make them look strong and empowered**

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5-23

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Male Sex Roles

- **Masculinism: study of male image and the complex cultural meanings of masculinity**

- **Three traditional models of masculinity:**
  - **Breadwinner**
  - **Rebel**
 - **Man-of-action hero**

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Male Sex Roles (cont.)

- **Metrosexual: straight, urban male who exhibits strong interests and knowledge regarding fashion, home design, gourmet cooking, and personal care that run counter to traditional male sex role**

- **Prosumers/urban influentials: educated consumers who are willing and able to focus attention on their personal appearance**

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Discussion

- *The "metrosexual" is a big buzzword in marketing, but is it real or just media hype?*

- *Do you see men in your age group changing their ideas about acceptable interests for males (e.g., home design, cooking, etc.)?*

- *Why do metrosexuals tend to live in urban areas?*

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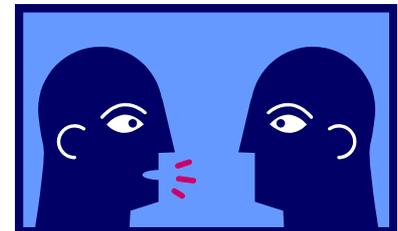
GLBT Consumers

- **4% to 8% of U.S. population**

- **Spend $250–$350 billion a year**

- **Compared to heterosexuals readers of gay publications are more likely to:**
  - **Hold professional jobs**
  - **Own vacation home**
 - **Own notebook computer**

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Body Image

- **Body image: a consumer's subjective evaluation of his/her physical self**

- **Body cathexis: person's feelings about his or her own body**

- **Strong body cathexis = frequent purchases of "preening" products**

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Ideals of Beauty

- **Exemplar of appearance**

- **"What is beautiful is good" stereotype**

- **Favorable physical features:**
  - **Attractive faces**
  - **Good health and youth**
  - **Balance/symmetry**
  - **Feminine curves/hourglass body shape**
  - **"Strong" male features**

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Waist-Hip Ratio
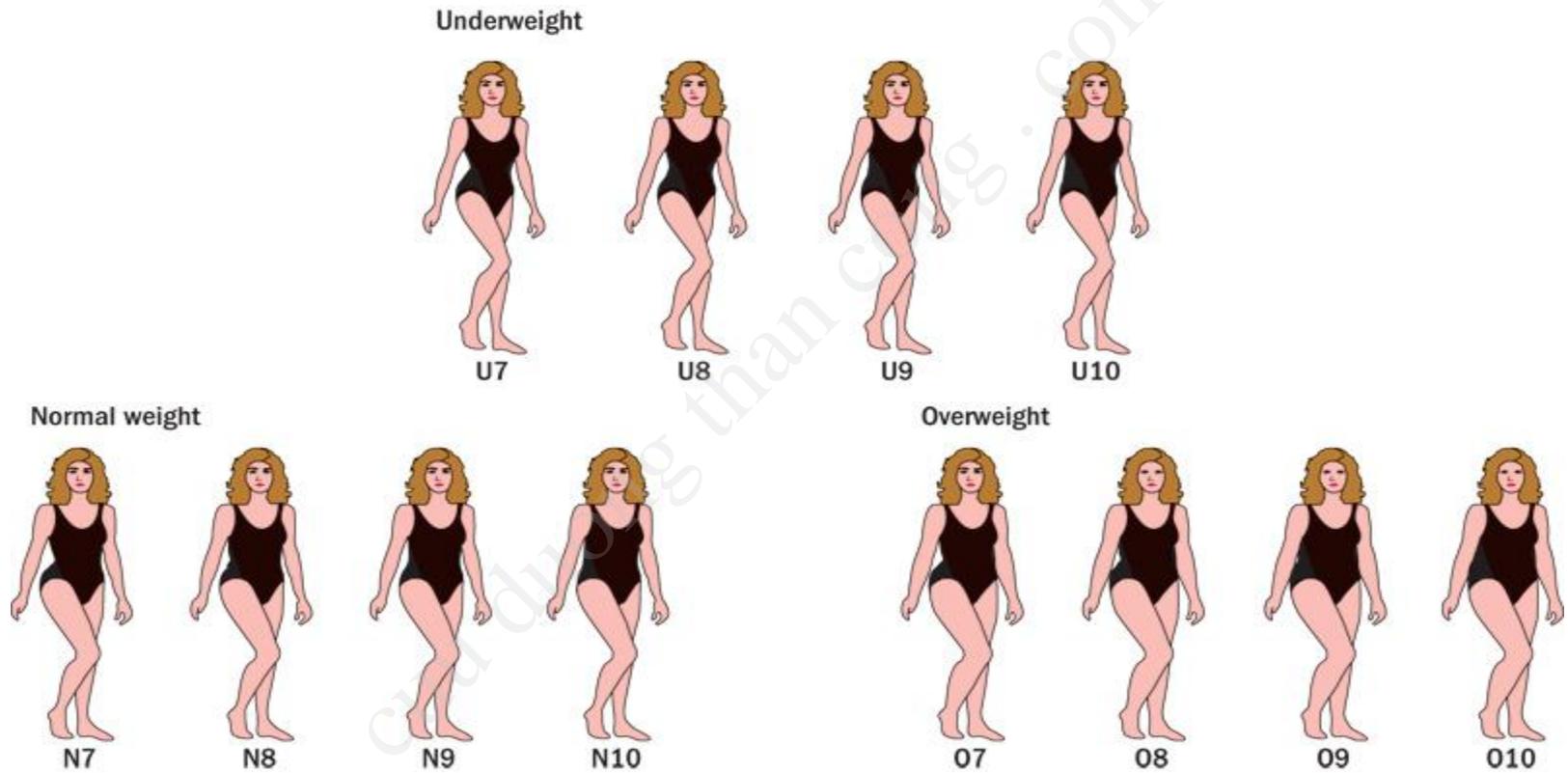
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Figure 5.1

The Western Ideal

- **Skin color and eye shape = status, sophistication, and social desirability**

- **Less powerful cultures adopt standards of beauty in dominant cultures**

- **Plastic surgery to obtain big round eyes, tiny waists, large breasts, blond hair, and blue eyes**

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Discussion

- **How prevalent is the Western ideal of beauty among your peers?**

- **How do you see this ideal evolving now (if at all)? If so, how?**

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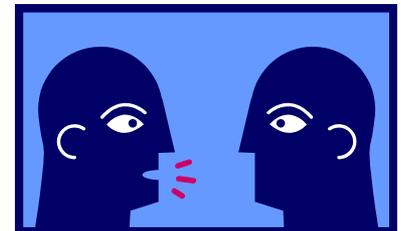
Ideals of Beauty Over Time

Specific "looks"/ideals of beauty

- **Early 1800s: "delicate/looking ill" appearance**

- **1890s: voluptuous, lusty**

- **1990s: "waif" look**

- **Bad economy: mature features**

- **Good economy: babyish features**

- **Modern : high heels, body waxing, eyelifts, liposuction**

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Ideals of Beauty Over Time (cont.)

- **Media and marketing communicate standards of beauty**

- **Plus-sized apparel market**

- **Strongly masculine, muscled body for men**

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Is the Western Ideal Getting Real?

- **Unilever conducted research that indicated consumers didn't believe beauty products really work**

- **Started campaign to reassure "real" women that their "imperfect" bodies were fine: Dove's campaign for real beauty**

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Body Image Distortions

- **To some, body quality reflects self-worth (particularly among women)**

- **Distorted body image is linked to eating disorders among females**

- **Body dysmorphic disorder (obsession with perceived flaws in appearance) becoming more common among young men**
  - **Steroid scandals**
  - **GI Joe/Batman action figures**

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Cosmetic Surgery
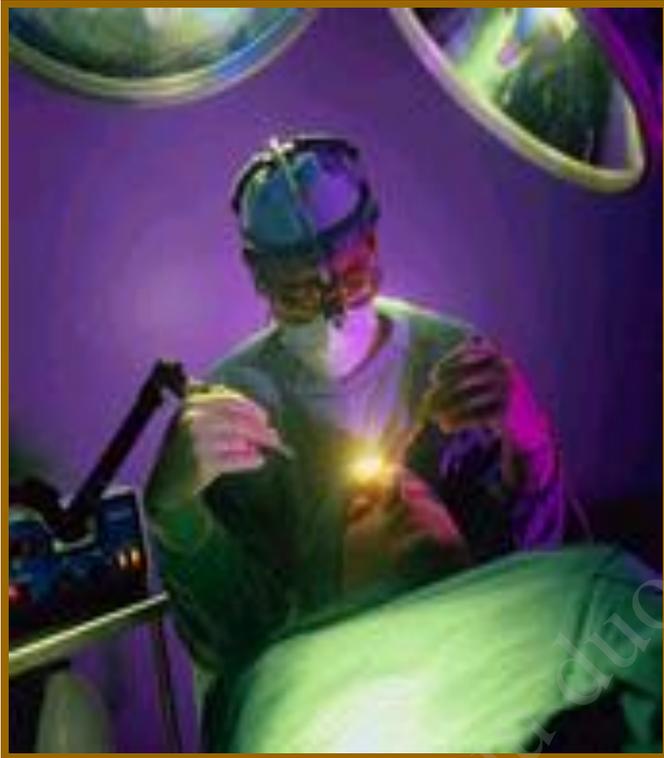
- **Changing a poor body image or to enhance appearance**
  - **TV: Nip/Tuck and Extreme Makeover**
- **Breast augmentation**
  - **Perception that breast size = sex appeal**

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Body Decoration and Mutilation

- **Decorating the self**
  - **Separates group members from nonmembers**
  - **Places the individual in the social organization**
  - **Provides a sense of security**
- **Tattoos and body piercing**
  - **Historically associated with social outcasts**
  - **Now a fashion statement**

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