

Consumer Behavior

7. Perception



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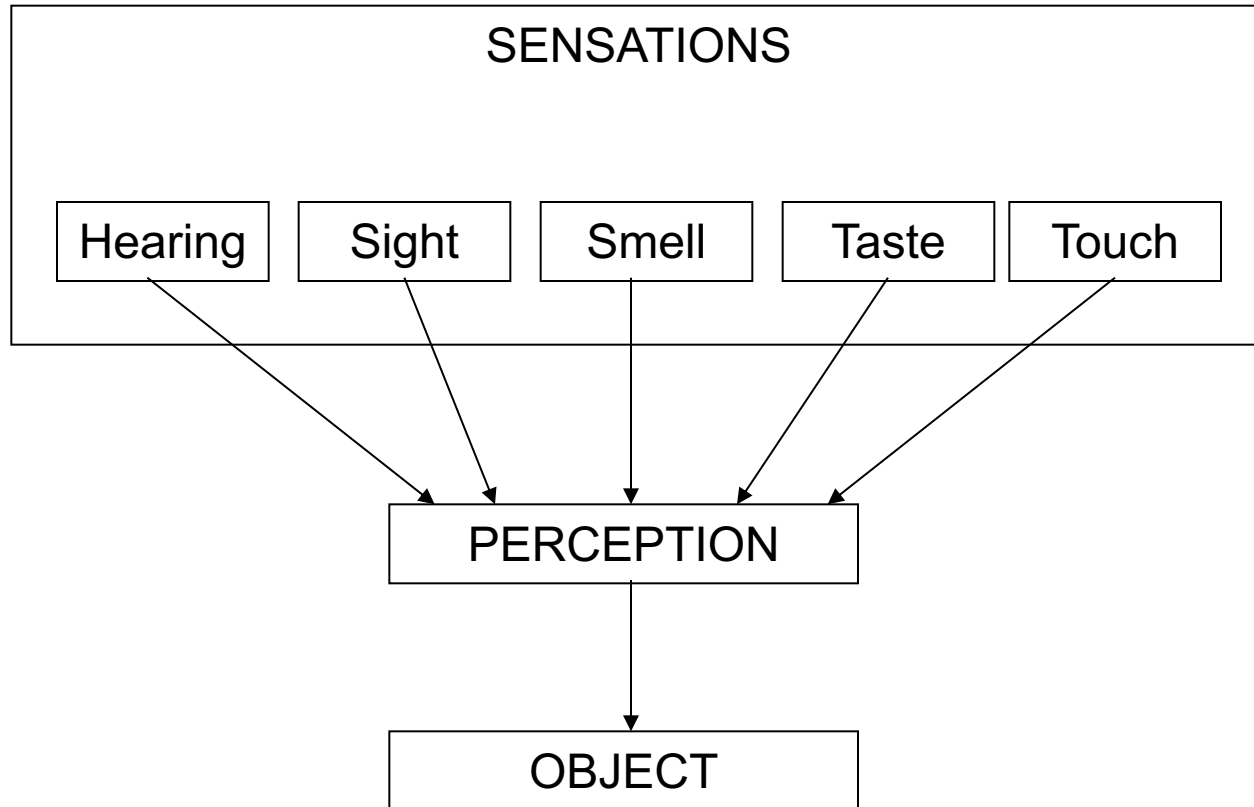
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7.1. Definition of perception

Perception is the set of **processes giving coherence**, unity and meaning to an individual's **sensory input**. It involves processes used to select, sort, organize and interpret sensory data making a coherent and meaningful picture of the world.

Every observed **object is a combination of** several different **sensations**. Subjects receive sensations through the five senses. **Sensations are then processed**, classified and ordered **by perception, resulting in a single representation of the** observed **object**.

Engle, J. F., Blackwell, R. D. & Miniard, P. W. (1990). *Consumer Behaviour*, (6th Ed). Dryden, NY.



Our perception of the world is not an absolute determined by the physical stimulation received, but is dependent on a variety of other factors. Although subject to the same sensory input, different people may perceive quite different things.



Sensory thresholds

There is a need of being aware of the stimuli.

Absolute threshold. The lowest level of stimulus that can be detected.

Differential threshold. A point at which the magnitude of the difference between two stimuli is sufficient for the subject to perceive the two of them as being different.

Dual thresholds. Some senses appear to have two separate levels of thresholds. One broad sense (hear a sound) and another more specific (identify what the sound is).

7.2. Selectivity of perception

Before we can perceive an event or an object, it is necessary for it to attract our attention.

Attention is selective. Attending to one stimulus tends to reduce the attention paid to others.

Attention may be conscious or unconscious. We can focus our attention on one activity at any given moment, but we can immediately change it to any other new peripheral stimuli.

Rice, C. (1993). *Behavioural aspects of Marketing*, Butterworth Heinemann., Oxford.

Attention span.

The **number of objects** or separate stimuli that can be **perceived in a single short time of exposure**.

The amount of **time** a person can **continue to attend to one** type of **input**.

Individuals can develop **longer attention spans** when they are involved **in an activity in which they are interested**.

Marketers want their messages to attract the attention of potential consumers. Targets may not be aware of the product or the message.

Rice, C. (1993). *Behavioural aspects of Marketing*, Butterworth Heinemann., Oxford.

7.3. Factors affecting perception

External factors.

Size. Increasing the size of an advertisement will increase the chances of it being noticed.

Intensity. Increased intensity of colors and sounds.

Position. “Hot spots” on supermarket shelves; Magazine’s front and back covers; Sections in a newspaper.

Contrast. Presentation of stimuli that are inconsistent or contrast with one another creates a perceptual conflict that attracts attention.

Novelty. New, unusual or unexpected stimuli attract attention.

Repetition. A repeated stimulus has an increased chance of attracting attention.

Movement. Stimuli in motion attract greater attention than static stimuli.

Internal factors.

Motivation. Motivation associated with the corresponding activity is likely to increase awareness and attention.

Interest. We tend to be more aware of things that we are interested in.

Need. Recognition of a need activates a search behavior which increases awareness.

7.4. Awareness set

Consumers can only select products from those which they are aware of.

The **awareness set** of a product is the group of brands that the consumer is aware of. The rest constitute the **unawareness set**.

In order to simplify the process of choice, consumers will finally make their choice from **a limited range of brands drawn from the awareness set**. This group is called the **evoked set**.

The **evoked set** are the **brands** about which the consumer has **positive feelings**.

For a product to be chosen, it is not enough for the consumer to be aware of it, they must think well of it to place it in their evoked set.

Howard, J. A. & J. N. Sheth (1969). *The Theory of Buyer Behavior*, Wiley, NY.

7.5. Subliminal perception

Subliminal means **below the threshold for perception**. Effects of stimuli which are too weak to be consciously perceived. A visual or auditory message that **is allegedly perceived psychologically, but not consciously**.

Subliminally perceived inputs can affect behavior. In some instances subliminally perceived inputs are more effective than supraliminal ones in affecting behavior. **However, inputs have never been shown to affect behavior in the absence of any evidence of perception**.

While subliminal perception exists and subliminal inputs may affect behavior, so far **no evidence** exists **that subliminal inputs can be used to exert any influence on unwilling subjects**.

Rice, C. (1993). *Behavioural aspects of Marketing*, Butterworth Heinemann, Oxford.