

## It's a Matter of Gestalt

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One way that consumers interpret a visual, external stimulus is based on the environment within which the stimulus occurs and the individual's memory. Gestalt psychology deals with not how an individual interprets the individual parts of a stimulus but, rather, how the individual interprets the whole pattern or configuration of the stimulus. Gestalt psychology identifies three principles that explain how an individual's brain organizes visual, external stimuli which come into view of the individual: closure, similarity, and figure-ground. If you pass by a billboard and see "ingle ells . . . ingle ells" written on the sign, your mind, based on memory, should immediately carry out a mental process that results in the stimulus being interpreted as "Jingle Bells . . . Jingle Bells," even though such words were not present on the billboard.

**Focus:** Gestalt psychology; principles of closure, similarity, and figure-ground; stimulus organization; human senses; memory.

### Questions:

1. Define each of the terms listed above.
2. Which Gestalt principle is being used in each billboard shown? Explain. How is it being used?
3. What is the brand name and the nature of the product in each billboard? How do you know?
4. In terms of Gestalt, how is the third billboard different from the first two billboards?
5. What does the consumer have to do to determine the brand name in each of the first two billboards? What does the consumer have to do to understand the brand name in the third billboard?
6. What is the actual structure of the information that makes up the brand name of the product in the third billboard? If the consumer did not have the name of the brand in memory and was not familiar with the alphabet, is there any other way that the information provided could be combined? Explain.
7. Why do you think the marketers structured the content in the billboards as it appears?

