



# Archetype Discoveries Worldwide







**Sexy side ups:** Some may idolize ever-shrinking celebs such as Nicole Richie, but for maximum hotness, opt for lipstick, a short skirt, a defined waist, and high heels—in short, Pamela Anderson.

**A**mericans are people who know what they want. But according to Clotilde Rapaille, a French expat with a PhD in medical anthropology, our *modus operandi* is completely unconscious. In his book *The Culture Code: An Ingenious Way to Understand Why People Around the World Live and Buy as They Do* (Broadway Books), the controversial author says a cocktail of biology and society—the “culture code”—dictates everything from our sexual palate to our aesthetic inclinations. Rapaille, who counts 50 of the Fortune 100 companies as clients, helped L’Oréal overhaul its marketing strategy by studying international cues for seduction. Turns out we unknowingly tip off men as to our reproductive aptitude. Thought high heels were merely the perfect accessory? Think again. —RACHEL HOLTZMAN

**ELLE:** You’ve said seduction is a game—any way to win beyond coyly batting our eyelashes?

**CLOTAIRE RAPAILLE:** Yes, it’s to pretend you don’t want to be seductive. According to my research, you want to have an allure, but not too much, because America is a puritan culture. Have a classic way of dressing that isn’t too vulgar or sophisticated, otherwise men get the wrong message. The pattern of behavior is for women to attract men, but also to make them feel comfortable, to show that they need a man. A little weakness is a big element of seduction.

**ELLE:** So we’re better off adopting Barbie as a role model?

**CR:** Men in America are afraid of strong women who have too much power. That’s why the dumb-blond archetype is perfect. Part of the L’Oréal research on seduction was on the significance of hair color. In Europe, blond is associated with the north, which has a spiritual, beautiful dimension. In America, where so many people have German or Scandinavian ancestry, it’s the same connection of blond and beauty; but here, we found that if the blond dimension is seen as attractive, it’s not supposed to be intelligent.

Brunettes attract men who like life to be complicated, who want to be overpowered by women. Unconsciously for men, a brunette who bleaches her hair can be even sexier because she isn’t a real blond. So she is a woman who is strong and can

## POPULAR SCIENCE

THINK THE PERFECT WARDROBE, COIF, AND CURVES WILL LAND YOU THE PERFECT MAN? ONE FRENCH MARKETING EXPERT SAYS IT ONLY SPELLS REPRODUCTION

pretend she is a bimbo to please a guy.

**ELLE:** Anything else?

**CR:** One trigger for sexiness is high heels: You’re telling men you can’t run away, you’re available, you can be caught. Same with skirts—easier access than pants. Put the two together, bingo. But that speaks directly to the reptilian (or caveman) brain, and while you might attract men, they’re only looking for sex. In the L’Oréal study, I found we all have the same behavioral patterns—the Chinese make the feet of women smaller, the Japanese want women

to wear tight kimonos. Men don’t want to have to run after a woman—they want a woman who is available.

**ELLE:** You say women in our culture are wary of their sexuality. What about members of the Paris Hilton school of fashion?

**CR:** If you wear jeans that are low, you’re baring your belly button. The belly button is the center of the universe; it’s the place the umbilical cord comes from. So the belly button is directly showing that you are a woman who can have children. So that’s not your sexual side, it’s your maternal side.

**ELLE:** Any advice for the more modest women among us?

**CR:** The magic number for women who want to seduce men is 0.7. It’s the ratio between the waist and the hips, which means you have to have a small waist. That’s why we invented corsets. I’ve found that you want to accentuate the waistline to better show your bust (food for the kids) and hips (the place to deliver the baby). It’s a biological hot button for men.

**ELLE:** Why, then, the obsession with superskinny celebrities and models?

**CR:** A majority of Americans are overweight—the fatter we become, the thinner we want to be, and same with the icons we adore. You want to be like them, and you know you can’t, but you still want to be.

**ELLE:** And does the archetypal beautiful woman have a face?

**CR:** When the female monkey is ready to mate, her lips become big and red, and she has a special scent to attract the male. So women do that with lipstick and perfume. The eyes are important—there’s a sexual dimension there in that you say yes or no with them. When you kiss someone and you close your eyes, you don’t need to think. You give up control. □



## On My Mind

By Clotilde Rapaille, CHAIRMAN OF ARCHETYPE DISCOVERIES WORLDWIDE AND AUTHOR OF *THE CULTURE CODE*,  
PUBLISHED THIS MONTH BY BROADWAY BOOKS

# Marketing to the Reptilian Brain

Pry away the slick answers of a focus group and get to the instincts buried beneath.

WHAT'S THE BIGGEST PROBLEM with traditional market research? You can't believe what people say.

It's not that people intentionally lie during surveys and focus groups; it's that they try too hard to please. When asked about their interests and preferences, they tend to give answers they believe the questioner wants to hear. This is because people respond with their cerebral cortexes, the part of the brain that controls intelligence, rather than emotion or instinct. Their answers are the product of deliberation. In most cases, however, they aren't saying what they feel. One of the greatest focus-group flops of all time: New Coke, the overly sweet beverage Coca-Cola introduced in 1985. General Motors' late-'90s Cadillac line is another example. Relying on traditional market research, GM introduced a series of plain Caddies with improved gas mileage and high safety ratings. They barely sold.

When Chrysler decided to offer a new sedan model to the American market, it had already done a great deal of research that suggested American consumers wanted high gas mileage, excellent safety ratings and good prices.

The problem was that those sedans were designed with the cortex in mind, when buying decisions are strongly influenced by the reptilian brain, which is made up of the brain stem and the cerebellum. Only accessible via the subconscious, the reptilian brain is the home of our instincts. It programs us for two major things: survival and reproduction. In a three-way battle between the cortical, the limbic (home of emotion) and the reptilian areas, the reptilian always wins, because survival comes first. When you tap into the reptilian brain, you learn what a product means to a consumer at its most fundamental level.

I have learned to do this through extended, decidedly nontraditional sessions designed to glean what I call a "Code," the unconscious meaning people give to a particular product, service or relationship. In the first hour participants engage their cortexes



People respond to surveys by deliberating intelligently, but buying decisions are governed by instinct.

when an interviewer takes the role of a "visitor from another planet," asking participants to help the visitor understand the product in question. In the second hour participants use their limbic systems to tell stories about the products. In the third hour they tap their reptilian inner selves. Lying on pillows with the lights dimmed, they first go through a relaxation exercise. Then they write about their first experiences with the product, expressing what was imprinted into their subconscious.

For Chrysler, this process demonstrated that cookie-cutter sedans are "off-Code." This information led to the creation of the PT Cruiser, introduced in 2000. The car's highly distinctive design made it one of the most successful American car launches in recent memory. For the first 12 months U.S. unit sales totaled 132,000. (The car is still popular, with sales of 135,000 in the last year.)

Of course, sometimes companies just go on gut instinct and come up with a hit. Witness the popularity of Apple's sleek white iPod. That device's design and function fit perfectly within the American Code for technology—magic.

Discovering Codes can lead to marketing success with all sorts of products. In the realm of food, Americans view their bodies as machines. Food serves as fuel to keep that machine running smoothly. Thus Taco Bell's marketing campaign for its 99-cent menu, in which delighted patrons announce, "I'm full!" worked beautifully. As does Red Bull's advertising, which claims that its drink "gives you wings." Think of the success of PowerBars, which are directly on-Code.

For food companies selling dinner products, it helps to recognize that Americans see dinner as a time to form a circle around a plate set in the middle of the table. Kraft has successfully exploited this Code with the catchphrase "Gather around" and an animated Kraft logo that morphs into a family surrounding a dinner table. It takes much more than a standard focus group to crack these Codes.