

## **The Gruen Transfer**

“Follow-up researchers, using video cameras to capture shoppers’ faces, discovered something even more interesting: shortly after entering a mall, a person’s expression went blank. The jaw dropped, the eyes glazed over, and the shopper’s path through the mall became less directed. This phenomenon, named the Gruen Transfer, was defined as the moment when a person changes from a customer with a particular product in mind to an undirected impulse buyer.”

“Retail architects developed a subspecialty called “atmospherics,” the science of manipulating shopper’s senses to make them buy more. They discovered that obscuring the time of day led customers to spend more time in the mall. Forcing people to make three turns when walking from the parking lot into the mall led them to forget in which direction they had parked the car (and you thought it was just you). Without this sense of an anchor, customers walked around more aimlessly. The floors in the corridors were made of harder materials than the floors in the stores, subtly encouraging tired shoppers inside. Studies on smell led corporations to concoct trademarked scents for each of their store brands. Muzak’s research teams developed soundtracks capable of making people chew food faster, try on more clothes and spend more money.”

“By the 1990’s retailers were exploiting more than just the five sense, and moving on to a higher order of behavioral manipulation. Stores for teenagers were all put in on section of the mall, so that kids could be more easily isolated from their parents and targeted without adult interference. Companies with names such as Envirosell used security camera tapes to analyze many kinds of consumer behavior. Bigger sales counters make people feel self-conscious about purchasing only one small item; if a women is accidentally “butt-brushed” by another shopper while stoop over to inspect an item, she won’t buy the item; people tend to move to the right when entering a store rather than to the left. These studies led to theories about how to sell more stuff to more people in less time.”