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Powerful face of a  
BMW 5 series 550i  
Sedan  
autos.yahoo

## [Pareidolia Helps Customers Choose Cars](#)

### *Associating car shapes with human faces influences buyers*

As car makers and dealers are yearning to find new approaches and features that would make their cars sell better, a new study tests how the pareidolia levels in people affect whether they like a car or not.

Pareidolia refers to people's ability of finding human traits or even whole faces in objects that usually lack them, like clouds, dirt or, yes, cars. There are many of us that, after seeing a new car model, thought that it looked happy, cute, smiling, powerful or frightening. Based on this aspect, researchers like Truls Thorstensen, chief of EFS Consulting Vienna, investigated the depths of this association process by a thorough study. Hopefully, this will aid car companies and designers in their endeavor to launch more appealing products on the market. "When investing in a new passenger car, you're talking about billions," explains Thorstensen. "If you get the wrong styling, you get problems."

The study involved that 20 male and 20 female subjects associate a number of 38 cars (SUVs excluded, since they would have negatively altered the results) designed between 2004 and 2006 with human facial characteristics like emotion, personality or maturity. Following that, they were asked to say whether they liked the car or not. The results of the research indicated that people tend to choose "powerful" cars, such as the BMW 5 series. The participants demonstrated common opinions on what makes a car "cozy", "smug" or "afraid". The scientist who conducted the study want to improve it by adding more factors, such as monitoring the subject's brain and eyes activity, and also by applying them in countries where there is no knowledge of the latest cars, like Ethiopia. Some companies, like Toyota, think of adapting the car "faces" according to the region of the world they are sold in.

Sonja Windhager, an anthropologist from the University of Vienna who was involved in deploying the study, expected more from the results, "These questionnaires are limited in the things you can infer from them. You have to ask people, and they have to reflect on them. We wanted to go to more subconscious level".