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*Send copy of letter
study to client*

CONSUMER CUES TO QUALITY - BOLT ACTION
CENTER FIRE RIFLES - FINAL REPORT

Three consumer group sessions were conducted in November 1982 with recent and prospective center fire bolt action rifle buyers to determine the "cues" by which a prospective buyer assesses the quality of a rifle. An "expert" (custom gun maker) session was also conducted to help provide added insight into this issue.

"Cues" are the visible/external elements of a product (in this case a gun) which a consumer uses to come to some determination of the overall workmanship and performance of that product. A "cue" on a gun is usually a more subtle element than an obvious feature like a hinged floor plate and less noticeable than an attribute like "good wood-to-metal fit". However, these latter elements could be considered strong "cues" to quality for some consumers.

"Cues" are generally the numerous details on a product which convey to the consumer a concern for how it was manufactured. The addition of "cues" tends to have a cumulative effect to a point where the gun emits an "aura" of fineness.

Prospective center fire rifle buyers are greatly influenced by the cosmetics/appearance of a gun. To these buyers, an attractive/"pretty" gun conveys quality. Since a center fire rifle's stock is the largest part of the gun, it has more of an impact on generating an impression of "attractiveness" than any other component.

This research indicates that a "cue" to an attractive stock is tapered/slender lines. A stock designed and manufactured

with these kinds of lines conveys an attention to detail by making sure that the wood "flows" into the metal rather than looking like a "pipe stuck on a 2" x 4".

The research strongly suggests that a center fire rifle should have an "integrated appearance". An example of this is the way various metal parts are finished. While consumers prefer all machined parts, they grudgingly accept stamped parts in certain areas if they are finished "well", that is, if an aluminum stamping looks like (after bluing) the machined steel in the receiver or barrel. If this is done the metal parts all look the same.

The above discussion, hopefully, has clarified the notion of "cues" and how they apply to center fire rifles. The final report attached itemizes and elaborates them more fully.

In conclusion, this research suggests that we should avoid making unnecessary internal changes if they only marginally improve a new gun's performance. The benefit of these kinds of changes (improved consumer acceptance) would probably not justify the cost of implementation.

J. H. CHAMBERS *JHC*

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