

# Smells sell

So you want shoppers to stay longer and spend more in your store? In-store fragrancing adds a new twist to experiential marketing. Patricia Moore went sniffing for the full story.

Building a brand can be challenging, and, if the latest retail trends are anything to go by, it just got a whole lot more so! Today's consumers expect that something extra before they bond with a brand; the way your store smells could well be the decider.

Smells sell; the key is to find the scent that will translate into dollars once it's pumping through the store.

There's nothing new about using fragrances to attract business; think coffee and fresh baked bread. What is new is a focus on experiential marketing – connecting consumers with brands in a combination of 'personally relevant and memorable ways', such as fragrancing and music – and the research going into the effects of ambient odour in the retail environment.

Helen Thompson-Carter, general manager of Ecomist Systems, the New Zealand company that's leading shoppers by the nose here and in Australia, Korea, the Philippines and South Africa, cites research which demonstrates in-store fragrancing results in customers staying in-store longer, buying more, and coming out with an increased perception of the quality of the store's services and products.

Michael Morrison, from Monash University's department of marketing, is a specialist in experiential marketing. He says,

while the connection between smells and emotion is well accepted, even without the use of research, surveys in real stores with real customers have produced some very interesting results.

"These include a significant change in behaviour when the store combines loud music and fragrancing. People stayed in store longer. The perception of the store was also influenced."

But are they spending more?  
"We're still evaluating the results on purchase intent but I can say this is potentially very exciting."

The presence of a particular aroma can increase emotional responses and this in turn affects the desire to remain in store, says Dr Heather Buttle of Massey University's School of Psychology, whose area of expertise includes branding.

"But this doesn't mean a general mood change which may make customers spend more time, and/or money. Rather it seems a well-chosen scent will actually enhance the particular product."

"For example the smell of coconut may help sell bikinis, but if the same smell is around other products, such as business suits, it could be detrimental. Aroma can enhance the perception of product quality and the retail environment, but scents need

## THE RICH SMELL DIFFERENT

When Rolls Royce buyers in the mid '90s complained that new Rollers 'weren't the same', the automobile manufacturer pulled out all the stops to discover what was different.

They tracked it down to the smell of the new vehicles – and set about 'deconstructing' the odour of a 1965 Silver Cloud. Olfactory analysis revealed 800 different components, all of which have been repackaged and are used today to give Rolls Royce their 'authentic' new car aroma.

to be chosen carefully and used in context."

Ecomist Systems' Thompson-Carter says getting an in-store fragrance right



is a science; but they've simplified it with an aroma marketing tool created by their French perfumer Yves Dombrowsky. Essentially this involves cross-referencing the environment characteristics with those of the desired ambient fragrance.

Apparel retailer Supre, which targets young women from teens through twenties, has in-store fragrancing down to a fine art, says Thompson-Carter. Melbourne-based Cathy van der Meulen is their international brand manager.

"The aroma adds to the whole in-store ambience and experience. Customers enjoy being in store of course because of the fast fashion and loud funky music. The scent

completes the experience."

Matching fragrances with their target market and with particular sales promotions has been a particularly interesting exercise, she says. "From initial research with teen focus groups we had vanilla scent, then switched to have multiple fragrances reflecting the time of year, what was happening in store and so on. In the last couple of months we have been using Ginger Flower which is invigorating and uplifting."

But in-store fragrancing isn't all funky music and the scent of vanilla. Joanne Tod owns high-end menswear store Road to Rome, in Newmarket.

"After in-store merchandising and window displays, ambience is paramount, so the feel and comfort of the surroundings must appeal to all our senses. We look after sight and sound and music, but smell often gets missed.

"In Road to Rome we use a fragrance called 'sport royale'. It has a feeling of freshness in a masculine sort of way and people often ask what it is."

Tod says in-store fragrancing is not a leader in their effort to get people to buy, but something that, combined with other marketing techniques, increases the X-factor and makes the buyer feel more relaxed and at ease, and stay longer in store.

"And, as we know, the longer in store, the more chance of sale opportunities."

Ecomist has a menu of more than 150

fragrances ranging from apple pie and baby talc to vanilla and ylang-ylang, plus a 'moodmakers' collection. Some are inspired by classic perfumes (Shanel), others by favourite foodstuffs (Cocoa Chocolate), or the outdoors (New Mown Grass). Fragrances are also custom designed to suit particular clients – and push their target market's buttons.

## Emotional branding

Fragrancing is only the latest in an arsenal of weapons designed to make you spend more time and more money in your retail environment of choice.

So what's the next big thing?

Michael Morrison says emotional branding will grow, and highlights two areas: on-line shopping that offers in-store experiences including fragrance, and what he refers to as the 'segment of one'; and One-on-One marketing.

"Consumers can now design their own sandwiches...their own perfume...they like to be treated as someone unique and special."

Technology permitting, this could well mean the store greeting you by name when you enter!

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