



THE POWER OF SCENT MARKETING TO INCREASE SALES AT YOUR SPA

That new car smell, the scent of baking cookies in a show home...you're familiar with the concept of scent marketing.

If you run a spa, hotel, resort, or a combination of these, you've probably already put a fair amount of thought into what you want the atmosphere to smell like — relaxing, inviting, comforting, sophisticated perhaps? Hyatt, Ritz Carlton, Auberge, W, One Hotels, St. Regis, Shangri La ... hotels of renown use scent as part of their brand experience.

Are you engaging the sense of smell to its full potential? Scent marketing, also known as aroma marketing or olfactory marketing, is a strategic approach that involves using scents or fragrances to influence consumer behavior, and overall brand experience. It recognizes the power of scent in triggering emotions, memories, and associations, and leverages this knowledge to create a favorable atmosphere or association with a particular brand, product, or environment.

Scent marketing can be applied in various settings, including retail stores, hotels, casinos, spas, car showrooms, and even in product packaging. It aims to enhance customer engagement, increase brand

recognition, create a memorable experience, and ultimately drive sales.

By strategically selecting and diffusing specific scents, businesses can evoke certain emotions or create a particular ambiance that aligns with their brand image or objectives. The example above, which we're all familiar with, is the show home using the aroma of freshly baked bread or cookies to create a warm, inviting atmosphere. Luxury hotels, meanwhile, are known for diffusing signature fragrances in lobbies to evoke the feelings they want to associate with their brands.

Studies have shown that scent can have a significant impact on consumer mood, perception, and purchasing behavior. It can influence how customers perceive the quality of products or services, improve brand recall and recognition, and even affect the duration of their store visits. It's a sensory marketing technique that taps into the power of scent to create a more immersive and memorable brand experience, fostering positive associations.



The nose knows more than you know

Our noses are more powerful than you probably think. According to [Discover Magazine](#), a 2014 study showed that humans can distinguish around a trillion different odors, up from previous estimates of just 10,000 – though we don't have words for a trillion smells. Much of the experience of smelling happens under “the radar of consciousness,” as Discover puts it, and we can be influenced without realizing it.

Matthias Laska, a biologist at Linköping University in Sweden, has been comparing senses of smell across species, including humans. Laska told Discover he has found that humans smell as well as, or better than, many other mammals and are even better than dogs at detecting some scents. These include aromas produced by plants, while dogs are better at sniffing out fatty acids. These differences are likely attributable to evolutionary requirements. “Odors that are not relevant for you, you are usually not good at [smelling],” Laska told Discover.

And, like dogs, humans can pick each other out of a literal lineup by scent. In a 2015 study, Portuguese and Swedish researchers collected body odor samples from 20 male university students.

“Other students then watched a video of an actual assault by a man on a woman (to stir them emotionally), while sniffing a scent they were told was that of the suspect. In reality, it was the scent of one of the 20 male students. Afterward, the sniffers were given a “lineup” of five odor samples and asked to identify the person whom they had smelled — presumably not a very enjoyable task. Results were quite impressive, though. The “witnesses” were able to pinpoint the would-be suspect 75 percent of the time.” - Source: Discover

The smell of emotion

Research findings suggest we can also smell emotions. In 2015, researchers from Utrecht University in the Netherlands measured the facial movements of volunteers who sniffed sweat samples of people who had watched either happy scenes from Disney's *The Jungle Book* or scary clips from Stanley Kubrick's *The Shining*. After smelling the



Jungle Book watchers, participants “assumed a genuine happy facial expression,” the study author said. “It was subtle, yet significant.”

More research suggests we can sniff out fear, anger, sickness, and compatible lovers, and also detect whether we’re related to someone.

Can scents make us look younger and thinner?

Scents may even make us look younger and thinner. In a study that involved guessing the age of women shown in photos, participants who smelled grapefruit - and liked the smell of grapefruit - estimated the women to be 12 years younger than their actual ages. If the participants smelled spicy and floral notes, the women looked four pounds slimmer.

5 examples of scent correlation with increased consumer spending

Now we know a few of the things we can detect through scent and how it may influence our perceptions, let’s look at five examples of when scent was correlated with increased spending.

1. In a **field experiment**, customers of a second-hand clothing store faced one of three conditions: fresh linen scent (pleasant and priming the idea of “clean clothing”), vanilla sandalwood scent (pleasant control odor), or regular store odor (odorless control). The results showed that consumer spending in the fresh linen scented environment was almost double that of spending in the odorless control and pleasant odor control environments.
2. In a now famous study, Alan Hirsch and a colleague conducted an experiment in which subjects were sent into two identical rooms, one with a pleasant floral smell and the other with nothing but filtered air. In each room was an identical pair of Nike shoes. After 30 seconds in each room, the subjects were given questionnaires about the shoes. “What we found,” Hirsch told the [Chicago Reader](#) in 1994, “was that 84% of the subjects said they were more likely to buy



the shoes associated with the mixed-floral smell” – even when the smell dropped to undetectable levels. They also reportedly appraised the shoes at a higher price.

3. Another **early 1990s study** by Hirsch was conducted on three slot machine areas at a Las Vegas casino. Two were odorized, each with a different aroma, and a third served as an unodorized control. The money gambled in the area scented with Odorant No. 1 was 45% higher than on the previous and following weekends, while the amounts of money gambled in the slot machines surrounding Odorant No. 2 and in the control area did not change.

4. A **study at Washington State University** found that “simple scents” may work best when it comes to influencing spending. Researchers developed two scents: a simple orange scent and a more complicated orange-basil blended with green tea. Over 18 weekdays, they watched more than 400 customers in a home decorations store with either the simple scent, the complex scent, or no scent. The group exposed to the simple scent spent an average of 20% more.


5. In 2015 a research team at Temple University found a correlation between warm scents, consumer preference for luxury (more expensive items), and an increase in overall spending. The theorized reasoning was interesting. “If there is a warm scent in the room, people perceive the room to be smaller, and more full of other people,” said the lead study author. “As a result, they feel a little less socially powerful. In order to restore their feeling of power, they prefer premium or luxury brands.” The authors **wrote**, “Our findings provide practitioners with concrete insights on how different categories of scents work, and they can ultimately be translated into specific guidance for retailers’ strategy.”

Scent marketing is a powerful tool that businesses can utilize to create a more immersive and memorable brand experience. The sense of smell has a profound impact on emotions, memories, and, possibly, purchasing behavior. As businesses continue to explore the potential of scent marketing, it becomes clear that the nose truly knows more than we realize, and harnessing the power of scent can be a game-changer in the world of marketing and branding.



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