

## SCENT MARKETING EFFECTS ON CONSUMER PERCEPTIONS AND BEHAVIOR

Eglė Juozėnaitė<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract:** *The article analyzes the concept of scent marketing, the effects of scent on consumers' perceptions, and reviews the effects of scent on consumers' behavior. Scent marketing is a way of sensory marketing. Scents can be applied in various forms of a product to differentiate, position, and strengthen a brand and its image. Fragrance helps to create a first impression and can affect feelings, emotions, and behavior subconsciously. Consumers semantically connect certain scents to warm sensations, while relating others to cold sensations. Scent manipulations lead consumers to feel warmer or cooler, also scents affect consumers' food consumption behavior, potential voters' preferences, and perception of the environment. Scent positively influences consumers' willingness to pay a price premium, and purchase more premium brands. The right scent can tempt customers to spend longer at a business. Scent marketing plays a role in making the environment more effective, which is why some brands patented their signature fragrances. A signature scent that fits with the brand can evoke positive emotional responses, make customers recall their experiences, and distinguish the brand from its competitors.*

**Keywords:** *scent marketing, effects of scent, consumer, brand.*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

*Relevance and the problem of the topic.* Scent marketing is a way of sensory marketing. Many kinds of businesses use scent marketing: museums, amusement parks, train stations, hospitals, hotels, condominiums, casinos, car dealerships, office buildings, banks, doctors' offices, restaurants, funeral homes, retail stores, senior living facilities, and more. Scents subconsciously affect consumers' feelings, emotions, and behavior. Exploring the scent marketing effects on consumers is a complex and responsible process because the same

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Corresponding author:<sup>1</sup> Master of Public Relations Management, Mykolas Romeris University, Lithuania, egle.juozenaite@gmail.com

scent can have a different effect on consumer perceptions and behavior. Not a properly chosen scent could have a negative effect on the business or could have a negative reaction, but a properly chosen scent could be beneficial for consumer affections, reactions, and behavior. It is not entirely known what scent to use and what effects on consumer perceptions and behavior scent marketing have. Knowing that is especially important in today's rapidly changing context. Because scent, which fits the brand, can help to create an attachment to the brand, differentiate, position, and strengthen the brand of the organization.

*The problem analyzed* in this article can be defined by the following questions: When to choose scent marketing? What effects scent marketing could have on consumer perceptions and behavior? Based on this information, it will be possible to continue research in the field of marketing management, communication, and public relations management to reveal the scent marketing effects on consumer perceptions and behavior and to use scent marketing as the strategy to advertise, differentiate, position, and strengthen the brand of the organization.

*Problems.* It is not entirely known what effects on consumers' perceptions and behavior scents could have, because scents are environmental information, shaping and shaped by different kinds of mediums. Scent marketing could gain positive consumer reactions, perceptions, and desirable behavior, but not properly chosen scent can lead to negative consequences: bad first impressions, negative associations, or reactions.

*Objective.* To review and analyze the effects of scent marketing, on consumers' perceptions and behavior.

*The object:* the effects of scent marketing on consumers.

*Tasks:* 1) To analyze scent marketing theoretical aspects; 2) To analyze the effects of scent on consumers' perceptions; 3) To review the effects of scent on consumers' behavior.

*Methods* of comparative theoretical analysis and synthesis of the literature, generalization.

## **2. SCENT MARKETING THEORETICAL ASPECTS**

For centuries, scents have been used for religious purposes, in traditional treatments as well as in everyday life. From the very beginning of civilization, people realized that scents regarded as pleasant may have a good influence on their mood, health, and their social position perception [1]. Scents are environmental information transmitted atmospherically;

shaping and shaped by immersive mediums (air, water, sociality) and differing forms of materiality. In both meteorological and social atmospheres, scents condition (and are conditioned by) air, space, and bodies of all kinds in diverse ways [2]. All kinds of businesses, including museums, amusement parks, train stations, hospitals, hotels, condominiums, casinos, car dealerships, office buildings, banks, doctors' offices, restaurants, funeral homes, retail stores, senior living facilities, and more, use scents [3].

Scents may be used to differentiate the brand in an increasingly competitive market where the usual marketing mix is not sufficient (an example being major clothing chains such as Abercrombie & Fitch and hotel companies such as Marriot being noted for their signature scents), as well as generally to provide better in-store experiences to their customers and increase their spending and likelihood of revisiting the store [4].

In their attempt to decode a rapidly changing market, retail businesses have expanded the “4P’s”, the variables in the traditional marketing mix (Product, Prize, Place, Promotion), to “7P’s” (Product, Prize, Place, Promotion, People, Problem, Proximity), because retail marketing is, certainly, changing. This is particularly so, when they refer to final sales, buyers, or final consumers, and, therefore, to points of sale [5]. 7Ps Marketing Mix is a tactical marketing toolkit that can be controlled, product, price, promotion, and distribution that the company combines to produce the desired market response. The elements of the marketing program include seven things: product, price, place, promotion, people, process, and physical evidence [6].

Companies are focusing on sensory stimuli to build powerful brands and are delivering their branding message by touching on as many human senses as possible. They moved from a classic brand building (two dimensions) to a sensory brand building, also called 5D branding [7].

Sensory branding concerns how a brand uses the five senses to create brand identity and position the brand at an individual level, resulting in brand image. A sensory branding model (see Fig. 1) incorporates societal culture, service environment, and brand as important factors. The model shows how sensory branding strategies might affect consumers’ affective and cognitive reactions, as well as their purchase behavior, through preferences, stimuli, perception and symbolism [8].

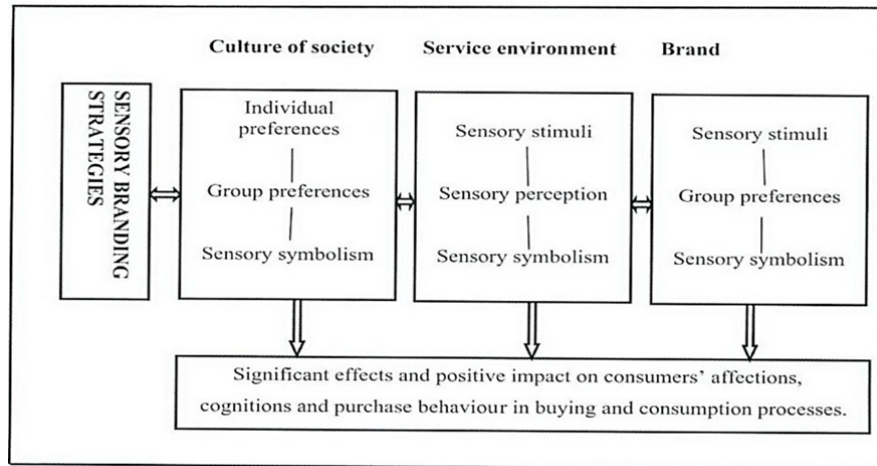


Fig. 1: Sensory branding model

Sensory marketing is defined as the totality of techniques that aim to seduce the consumer using the senses in order to influence mood and behavior. Sensory marketing is the set of actions controlled by the manufacturer/distributor with the aim of creating, around the product or service, a specific multi-sensory atmosphere through the characteristics of the product in question, or/and through the environmental component of the point of sale [9]. Sensory marketing aims to use all five senses: sight, sound, taste, scent, and touching. Stimuli, present in the environment, affect all five senses, sensations are formed, and thus organism receives the information from the environment. Senses affect consumer moods and emotions [10]. Therefore, sensory marketing aims to create a reflex reaction or emotional association with a certain brand or with product [11].

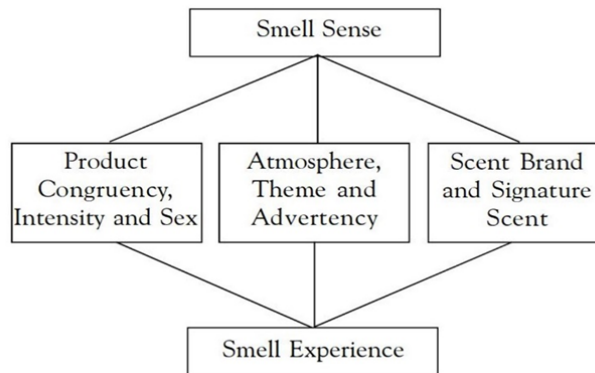
Scent marketing is a way of sensory marketing that cannot yet pass in the online environment and which tries to create attachment to the brand and which consists in providing a signature that distinguishes products from others on the market. It is likely that solutions to print these thematic, environmental and online promotion scents will soon be found through the use of flavour dispersers, which will be able to contribute to increasing the attachment to a certain brand, and will strengthen companies' strategies development by using emotional factors in their marketing strategies [11]. Scent branding is also known as olfactory branding. It is in its unique ability to form immediate, powerful, and differentiated emotional connections with customers, particularly within a category of functionally similar offerings. That's because a unique scent can spark the memory of the associated products or events,

even for an incident dating back to one's childhood. And olfactory recall can extend to 10,000 different odors, if not more [12].

In olfactory marketing, scents can be applied in various forms of a product to differentiate, position, and strengthen a brand and its image. Therefore, scents are an important component because it directly affects the customer's memory and potential for a good experience [13].

The importance of the presence of a smell is confirmed, since it leads to a better perception for visitors to a museum compared to a scenario without smells. Olfactory marketing is influential on the evaluations of customers, generically understood as the recipients of a good or service, improving their experience and giving them a greater desire to return than found when scent is not used [14]. The effect of **scent** is so potent that it's become the latest technique to be embraced by forward-thinking home vendors. In the driven world of real estate, the bid to attract viewers with a genuine intention to purchase has never been higher, with **scent marketing** being seen as the last frontier by which to make a property truly stand out from the crowd [15].

The scent contributes to the strengthening of a company's brand identity and image. The smell is a tactic to advertise, differentiate, position, and strengthen the brand of the organization (see Fig. 2) [16].



*Fig. 2: Sense expressions and the smell experience*

Fragrance needs to be consistent with the brand image to build customer satisfaction along with increased intention for revisits [17]. Congruency between a scent and another

atmospheric cue can be achieved in different ways. For example, atmospheric cues can be matched based on a holiday such as Christmas music and scent [18]. Managers should search for the congruency between the scent and the character of the store due to the fact that aromatisation multiplies its effect not only on the store's image but also on customers' satisfaction and loyalty [19].

### 3. SCENT EFFECTS ON CONSUMERS' PERCEPTIONS

Fragrance helps to create that first impression, to create a long-lasting positive emotional state of mind [20]. It is stated that some scents, smelled even in very small doses (below conscious perception), can affect consumer moods subconsciously [21]. Certain fragrances are scientifically proven to influence feelings, emotions, and behavior, and some of the biggest brand names have been utilizing this for many years. For example, Starbucks stores pervade customers with the aroma of freshly ground coffee. And while, of course, they sell this, they also sell food. But customers don't smell that, they only perceive the fragrance of coffee, being pumped into the air [22]. For example, Fiat promoted its fresh summer-edition 500 model with mint-scented newspaper ads [23].

There are many scents in the world, and a thousand of them is classified as primary scents, also there exist many combinations of them. Every primary scent can affect mood and behavior. It is stated that the scents of lavenders, basil, cinnamon and citric fruit help relaxing, the scents of peppermint, thyme and rosemary give energy, ginger, cardamom, liquorice and chocolate stimulate romantic mood, the scent of rose fights with depression [24]. Positive emotions, such as being happy or in love, are associated with pleasant scents, whereas negative emotions, such as feeling lonely or being sad, are associated with unpleasant scents [8].

Consumers semantically connect certain scents, such as vanilla and cedar wood, to warm sensations, while relating others (e.g., mint, eucalyptus) to cold sensations [25]. Lefebvre and Biswas examined the differences between warm (cedar wood, cinnamon, and sandalwood) and cool (lavender, eucalyptus, and a composition called winter green) scents in a series of field and lab studies [26]. Their results not only show that ambient scent manipulations lead consumers to feel warmer or cooler, but also that scents affect consumers' food consumption behaviour in a way comparable to the effects induced by warm vs. cool ambient temperatures. For example, consumers in the warm (vs. cool) ambient scent

condition consume more cool beverages and consume fewer high-calorie snacks. The researchers attribute these changes to consumers' attempts to regulate their body temperature.

Scent tends to affect potential voters' preferences for political parties. German voters perceive right-wing parties as colder compared to other parties. Consumers in the warm (vs. cool) scented room show a greater preference for right-wing parties [27].

In a study, to detect the function of fragrance, a room containing low levels of fragrance was considered by subjects as brighter, cleaner, and fresher, yet no subject noted the fragrance [28]. Spence narrated how fragrance has been found to positively influence consumers inside a flight to help reduce stress and anxiety of travel and build an impression of hygiene and cleanliness inside the flight [29].

Scent has ability to physically represent the essence of an object, thus bringing it viscerally closer. Six studies documented this effect across several product categories (e.g., soap bars and liquid soap, candles, medical tincture) and across different scents (e.g., vanilla, lavender, mint, turpentine). Scented ads consistently enhance the sense of product proximity regardless of whether the information about the scent is made salient or not and regardless of how central scent is as a product attribute. Even unpleasant scents enhanced proximity of the advertised product [23].

#### **4. THE EFFECTS OF SCENT ON CONSUMER'S BEHAVIOR**

The subliminal message of scent not only imprints a brand firmly in the psyche of consumers but also has subtle yet powerful influences on customer behavior [30]. Scent positively influences consumer responses [31]. Moreover, the scent could motivate product preference over other alternatives and willingness to pay a price premium [23]. The American Marketing Association states that the right fragrance can tempt customers to spend up to 44% longer at a business [22].

In executives' search for new ways to create a distinct and irreplaceable in-store experience, some focused on the ambient scent [12]. Consumers purchase more premium brands in environments with a warm (vs. cool) ambient scent [32]. Ambient scent has created various success stories: Hyatt Place enhanced its brand memorability, Novotel increased its breakfast sales, and Samsung found that customers underestimated shopping time by 26% [12].

Another example is that of Cineplex, where the delightful whiff of popcorn is



apparent, and who doesn't associate a good movie with a bucket of this salty or sweet treat? Lowe's Home Improvement and Appliances pipe the smell of freshly cut timber throughout their locations - a delightful fragrance despite there being no wood cut within their establishments. Most businesses, small and large, utilize visual and auditory strategies to engage customers [22]. With a campaign for Pillsbury refrigerated-dough products during the holidays, General Mills gave commercials in movie theaters an extra touch by pumping alluring scent as cinnamon rolls appear on screen [33]. When customers see the picture of advertised food after smelling its odor, their desire to eat increases significantly compared to those who have not seen it [34].

Chains such as Cinnabon, Auntie Anne's Pretzels and Subway are known for paying attention to ambient scenting, doing everything from cooking trays of cinnamon and sugar and placing ovens at the front of locations, to baking at key times of the day with the goal of leading customers inside by their noses [35].

And restaurant operators - along with a growing number of ambient scenting technology companies - contend the power of aroma can set the stage for a memorable meal [35]. Chicago chef and restaurateur Grant Achatz at Alinea is famous for dazzling guests with taste and visual presentation. Achatz is known for his off-the-plate experiments with scent, including serving entrees atop pillows filled with nutmeg air that was pierced upon serving to release a sweet and nutty aroma. In other dishes, bites of bison tenderloin were served on a hot river rock placed onto a nest of fresh juniper boughs, which infused the dish with the scent of toasted juniper [35]. Sensory marketing plays a role in making the environment more effective in which they are used. Consumers who have a high level of education are more attracted towards restaurants using sensory marketing. This may be because of their environment catering to the highly sophisticated consumers [36].

Brands such as Abercrombie & Fitch has patented their signature fragrance, Fierce. United Airlines has the aptly named "Landing," and Turkish Airlines creates customer recognition with the fragrance named TK1933. And, of course, top-end hotels have been wafting visitors with their own carefully curated perfumes. When it comes to the pinnacle of consumer brand recognition, the power of scent is perhaps even more potent than that of sight or sound [15]. A signature scent that fits with the brand concept can evoke positive emotional responses, make them recall their experiences, and distinguish the brand from its competitors [37].



## 5. CONCLUSION

Scents can be applied in various forms of a product to differentiate, position, and strengthen a brand and its image. Scent marketing is a way of sensory marketing, which tries to create an attachment to the brand and consists in providing a signature that distinguishes products from others on the market. Scent marketing is the unique ability to form immediate, powerful, and differentiated emotional connections with customers.

Fragrance helps to create a first impression and can affect feelings, emotions, and behavior subconsciously. Consumers semantically connect certain scents to warm sensations, while relating others to cold sensations. Scent manipulations lead consumers to feel warmer or cooler, also scents affect consumers' food consumption behavior. Scent tends to affect potential voters' preferences for political parties. Different levels of fragrance affect consumers' perception of the environment. Also, the scent has the ability to physically represent the essence of an object.

Scent positively influences consumer behavior and responses, willingness to pay a price premium, and purchase more premium brands. The right scent can tempt customers to spend longer at a business. When customers see the picture of advertised food after smelling its odor, their desire to eat increases significantly. Scent marketing plays a role in making the environment more effective, which is why some brands patented their signature fragrances. A signature scent that fits with the brand can evoke positive emotional responses, make customers recall their experiences, and distinguish the brand from its competitors.

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