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MARCH 15, 2007

Sensory Branding Power

There can be no doubt that the financial benefits of branding campaigns are on a steady decline. As the cost of reaching consumers rises, competition for securing their attention increases likewise. A cacophony of commercial messages bombards the global population through multitudinous media channels every hour. Household television viewing hours are increasingly becoming the domain of children. The average child is exposed to 85,000 television commercials a year.

Contrast this with the 1,000,000 television commercials viewed through life by adults. A quick calculation will reveal that this equals watching 8 hours of TV commercials a day, seven days a week for six years. We're in a frenzied world indeed. Close to 1,000 new brands appear on store shelves each year, all clamouring for an introduction to the consumer. The frequency and volume of such introductions makes it increasingly difficult for marketers to harness the consumer attention that's fundamental to building those brands. The infiltration of every advertising method into every corner of people's lives is thorough. It's no wonder that the effectiveness of any one medium is diminishing, and that return on marketing expenditure is sliding.

The fact is, an ad that works is rare. The ever-decreasing power of advertising to influence consumer choice has resulted in a conversely-increasing stream of commercials that find their way into our homes. A recent McKinsey report states that the effect of TV commercials is likely to fall some 40 per cent over the coming years. Even though these statistics apply specifically to the United States, we're more than likely to see a similar trend in Europe. The reason is as simple as its remedy is distant: the more communications clutter there is, the less effect any part of it has on receivers. You could say that our brains have reached

full capacity in decoding the enormous amount of commercial data.

Brand-builders need something new.

Perhaps the way we communicate our brand messages needs to be re-evaluated. How do we optimise the success of commercials? How do we align them with the world of the contemporary consumer? We need something to break the advertising impasse. So let's take a look at that blockage. What's missing in the advertiser's armoury? It seems that messages are disabled before they're even discharged. They're missing their targets and failing to elicit purchase responses. So where does the future lie for brands and brand-builders?

Let's discuss the role of our senses in the advertising context. Suppose we broadened our horizons to encompass as many of the five senses as possible in our messages. Would this work to help break down that advertising impasse?

Sceptics correctly point out that deploying the sense of smell through television advertising is simply a nonsensical impossibility. But this physics-defying supposition is not what I'm suggesting. My argument is that, while a brand cannot impart an aroma via a television set, there's nothing stopping an aroma being fully integrated within the brand. Every householder makes it routine to sniff milk from the refrigerator before pouring it all over their cereal. This brief act of caution is instinctive – often born of bitter, or should I say, curdling, experience. Smelling for signs of decay helps keep us safe from foods that might have gone bad. When selecting meat and vegetables we employ these and more examination procedures: we feel for bruising, look out for suspicious worm-sized holes, smell for ripeness – and over-ripeness – before placing any item in the shopping basket. We open jars of jam in full expectation of hearing the 'click' that signifies the hermetically sealed contents have only now, for the first time, been exposed to the air.

Obviously, our senses play vital and complex roles in our discriminations about, and choices of, brands. Yet, until now, we have invested little time in gathering evidence of the effectiveness of exploiting any of the senses, apart from sight. With few exceptions, the visual dimension has, to date, been the only sense to have been nurtured by the advertising and associated design community. And, from the receiver's side, consumers tend to tune their senses to danger detection, rather than any expectation of sensory indulgence, when negotiating advertising messages. On both the transmission and receiving sides, advertising communications have remained implacably two-dimensional.

A French study conducted for a major food manufacturer tested this and yielded interesting results. The research tested two different packages for a diet mayonnaise product. The test subjects were female. Both containers held the same mayonnaise, and both even carried the same label. But the shapes of the bottles differed. One was slim-waisted, almost like an hourglass. The other was the opposite: rotund and reminiscent of Buddha's jolly and corpulent manifestations. You can probably guess which container was favoured by the

women whose responses to the packaging were tested. The hourglass version was preferred in 100 per cent of cases. So, the signals sent by the packaging shape made a substantial impact on subjects' choices. And the design was perceived from a tactile as well as a visual perspective. At last the marketing world's sole focus on visual stimuli is being broadened to encompass our four other senses.

In the past, any brand's appeal to hearing, touch, taste or smell has been, except in rare cases, either a matter of happy coincidence or the inevitable and obvious result of product function. Yet, much of our understanding of our environment is informed by our senses. In turn, our experiences inform our senses, the senses being linked to memory. And memories tap right into our emotional makeups. We store our values, feelings and emotions in memory banks.

Not so long ago, I was taking a stroll around Tokyo. As I made my way down the streets of Shibuya, I passed an elegantly-dressed woman. As arresting as she looked, it was her scent that stopped me in my tracks. In her wake she left an aromatic trail that immediately evoked a profusion of memories in me. Of course, like everyone, I've experienced smell-provoked memories on numerous occasions in my life. Odour-evoked memories are the product of what is referred to as the Proust phenomenon, named for Marcel Proust whose multi-volume novel, *À la Recherche du Temps Perdu*, devolves from a key scene in which the narrator experiences an emotional catharsis provoked when he sips warm tea into which crumbs from a madeleine cake have fallen. This multi-sensory experience stimulates memories from which the novel is woven. Although this account is one in which taste, smell, and touch are stimulated, the Proust phenomenon refers to spontaneous memory triggered by smell.

Brands aim to be memorable, yet mass communication and commercial messages remain resolutely two-dimensional: they're visual and they have sound. Yet humans are most receptive, and most likely to form, retain, revisit and reinterpret memory when all five senses are in operation. The power of sensory suggestion can be found everywhere. Kellogg's, the breakfast cereal experts, believe taste is as affected by the textures of the food as its flavour. Rice Crispies (also known as Rice Bubbles) that don't 'snap, crackle and pop' are quite simply considered to be stale, even though their taste will not have changed, and they may still be perfectly good to eat. So it's not surprising that Kellogg's considers the crunchiness of the grain as having everything to do with the success of the breakfast product. Emphasis is placed on the crunch we hear and feel in our mouths rather than the sound-effects we hear on commercials.

Additionally, Kellogg's has spent years experimenting with the synergy between crunch and taste. As part of their research they made contact with a Danish laboratory which specialises in obtaining the desired crunchiness of a breakfast cereal. Kellogg's wanted to patent their products' crunchiness, to trademark and own it in the same way they own their recipes and logo. So the Danish laboratory designed a unique crunch for Kellogg's. This patented crunch is indeed

distinctive, so much so that anyone serving themselves generic cornflakes from a glass bowl at a breakfast buffet would be able to recognise that the proffered cornflakes were not Kellogg's. The day Kellogg's introduced their unique crunch to the market, the brand moved up the ladder. Kellogg's had expanded the perception of their brand to incorporate all senses, with an emphasis on touch and in so doing, broadened the brand platform.

Expanding your brand platform to appeal to as many senses as possible simply makes sense. What aroma do you associate with afternoons at the cinema? Chances are you're thinking of popcorn. In fact, the smell of popping corn has become so strongly linked with going to the movies that, if it weren't there, you would more than likely be troubled by an unidentifiable absence. But, to be honest, the unique aroma of popcorn, the texture and sound of crunching cornflakes, and the distinctive smell of a new car all have very little to do with the quality or performance of a product. Yet these components have come to play a vital role in our relationships with products. The sensory stimulation they offer not only attracts consumer choice and influences our behaviour, it helps us distinguish one product from the next. These points of sensory difference have embedded themselves in our sensory memories and have become part of our decision-making processes. It is this very process that points the way towards the future of brand-building.

Over the next decade we will witness giant shifts in the way we perceive brands, and in the ways in which they are presented for our perception. So, what should you do if you're a brand custodian – a marketer responsible for the health of a brand? Well, there are practical steps you can take in order to move your brand from a two-dimensional existence to five-dimensional life. The transition towards a sensory brand is a process which ensures you don't misrepresent the brand or find yourself in a situation in which the brand does not fulfil its promises.

To succeed with a sensory branding strategy, it is essential that you don't plunge right in and start adjusting the sound, smell and tactility of your brand. Before chefs touch their ingredients, they have a clear vision of the gastronomic journey they want to create for their customers. Setting the stage is another apt metaphor. Carefully select the channels and the tools you plan to use and the senses you intend to tap into. Each element of your brand is integral to the eventual show. What exactly do you wish to present in your brand theatre? What messages will the brand impart? It's essential to be perfectly clear about the brand's core message from the outset. The trick is not to change every sensory experience at once, but to optimise your brand sense by sense. Your brand's sensory priorities will depend on the category of its products. But, from experience it is clear that working on sound, then smell, makes sense, not only because sound is easy to implement, but because sound is often underleveraged.

Consider your website. Does it include sound? Why not? A sensory experience should match your brand's values. So let the values drive the sensory signals

you identify. Does your brand espouse feminine values? Let its sound, texture and aroma express this. Don't be afraid of the additional cost associated with building sensory touchpoints into your design. The investment will pay off. It simply makes sense.

MARCH 21, 2008

Visual versus Verbal

Have you ever been asked which is more powerful, the eye or the ear? Probably not, because the answer is obvious. I'll bet that deep down inside, you believe the eye is more powerful. Call it "visual chauvinism," if you like, but it's a preconception held by many marketing people.

I'll bet, too, that you share a related preconception, first expressed some 500 years before the birth of Jesus Christ. Confucius says: "A picture is worth a thousand words."

Those seven words--not pictures, mind you, but words--have lived for 2,500 years. And the way things have been going lately, it seems like those seven words will never die. What agency president, creative director or art director hasn't quoted Confucius at least once in his or her career?

After analyzing hundreds of effective positioning programs, we ran into a surprising conclusion: The programs were all verbal. There wasn't a single positioning concept that was exclusively visual. Could Confucius have been wrong? We have come to the conclusion that the mind works by ear, not by eye. A picture is not worth a thousand words.

If you looked just at the pictures in almost any magazine or newspaper, you would learn very little. If you read just the words, however, you would have a pretty good idea.

In spite of the evidence all around us, communications people suffer from wordophobia, a morbid fear of words. To set the record straight, we had the Chinese characters translated to find out exactly what it was Confucius said. The translation: "A picture is worth a thousand pieces of gold." Not words, but gold!

We knew instantly that here was a true prophet. What Confucius foresaw was television and the movies, where a picture does indeed sell for thousands of pieces of gold. Son of a gun! And here, after all these years, I thought he was knocking words!

But what is a picture worth on television? That is, just the picture, without the sound?

Not much. As a matter of fact, without the words on the package or the graphics on the screen, pictures in a TV commercial have almost no communication value. But add sound and the "picture" changes.

If pictures alone make no sense, how about sound alone? Strange as it may seem, the sound alone in a television commercial usually carries an easy-to-understand message. Most classic print advertisements illustrate the same principle. The visual alone makes almost no sense. A print ad with both pictures

and words is more effective than either alone. But which is more powerful individually, the verbal or the visual?

Take the classic "Pepsi-Cola hits the spot" radio commercial, which first ran 56 years ago. Nothing, absolutely nothing, went into the mind via the eye. Yet the commercial hit a hot spot. Even today some people can recall the opening bits of Pepsi music, and are then able to recite every word of the jingle. Fifty-six years later!

That's interesting. An idea deeply embedded in the mind that didn't come in through the eyes. Something seems wrong with the conventional wisdom as to the superiority of the eye.

To obtain a more objective viewpoint on the subject, we spoke with Dr. Elizabeth Loftus of the University of Washington, a psychologist, teacher, researcher and author of more than eight books and 100 articles on the human mind and how it works. When we asked her which is superior, the eye or the ear, this was her reply:

"In many ways, the ear is superior to the eye. What I mean by that is that there is evidence from controlled laboratory studies that shows that when you present a list of words to people, and you present it either auditorily, say on a tape recorder, or you present it visually, say on slides, people remember more words if they hear the words than if they see them."

In the book I wrote with Al Ries, *Positioning: The Battle for Your Mind*, we said: "The name is the hook that hangs the brand on the product ladder in the prospect's mind." Now we know why. Apparently, thinking itself involves the manipulation of sounds deep inside the brain--even when the stimulus is purely visual, as with printed words.

William Shakespeare was wrong: A rose by any other name would not smell as sweet! Not only do you see what you want to see, you also smell what you want to smell. That is why the single most important decision in the marketing of a perfume is the name.

Would "Alfred" perfume have sold as well as "Charlie"? We doubt it. And Hog Island in the Caribbean was going nowhere until its name was changed to Paradise Island.

"Language and writing," said Ferdinand de Saussure, a famous Belgian linguist, "are two distinct systems of signs. The second exists for the sole purpose of representing the first." Translation: Print is a secondary medium that exists as a representation of the primary medium of sound.

The implications of these findings for the advertising industry are staggering. In many ways, they call for a complete reorientation from the visual to the verbal point of view. This isn't to say that the visual doesn't play an important role. Of

course, it does. But the verbal should be the driver, while the pictures reinforce the words. All too often the opposite is the case.

First off, then, the printed words should carry the bulk of the sales message. Cutesy or confusing words bring nothing but trouble.

Second, headlines should sound good, as well as look good. The rhyme or rhythm of the words can be powerful memory devices.

Finally, pictures need a very quick explanation, otherwise they will distract readers. "Stopping" people won't accomplish much, if they look but don't read.

In a television commercial, spoken words should carry the sales message. Most important, you should never let the pictures and movements overwhelm the sound. When this happens, viewers stop listening and little communication takes place.

This "distraction factor" explains why so many commercials tend to be misidentified by the public. It also explains why Procter & Gamble's much-maligned slice-of-life approach works so well. The format is verbally driven and rarely contains any visual distraction. People don't rave about their commercials, they just remember them.

APRIL 07, 2008

The Sweet Smell of Scent Marketing

Ask anybody to describe something “smelly” and you will find that there are many names for it: Stink, stench, smell, odor, scent, fragrance or (very scientific) olfactive experience. The use of any of those descriptors mainly depends on that person’s liking or disliking of anything scented.

What is the relevance to a branding blog, you may ask? Well, some marketers believe that adding a scent to a brand’s image creates a deeper connection with the consumer. It’s called “Scent Marketing”. It is a fact that our olfactory receptors directly connect to the limbic system, the portion of the brain responsible for emotions and decision-making. Sounds like a marketer’s goldmine to me...

Let’s go back to the time when a caveman would roast a piece of meat and attract others with the smell. Truth be told, most would have fought with him over his meal but some would have traded other stuff or favors just for having a bite – and you have early Scent Marketing. Fast forward to the streets of Louis XV’s Paris, filled with a stench that needed to be covered up to make the environment (including it’s inhabitants) tolerable. On a big holiday most major religions roll out their multi-sensory arsenal: the ornate garments and decorated places of worship (sight), the powerful organ (sound), the blessings (touch), various offerings of food or wine (taste) and burning incense (smell). In today’s environment basically everything and everybody smells. It is just a matter of how you use and control it to meet the idea of “pleasant” and “appropriate” du jour.

Advertisers and marketers are facing another problem: 80% of all brand communication is audio or visual. For most brands and products, taste and touch do not even apply. That leaves scent, the only sense we cannot block out permanently. The average adult breathes 18,000- 30,000 times a day - no threat here from TiVo or the iPod. How’s that for “number of impressions”?

Scent Marketing has leaders and followers: Singapore Airlines introduced a branded scent over 15 years ago along with a slew of other branding initiatives, making it the poster child of multi-sensory marketing. If not battered by problems such as high kerosene prices other airlines would have followed suit by now. SONYstyle infused scent in their stores and showrooms, Samsung followed just recently. Starwood Hotel’s Westin brand started a scenting frenzy in the hospitality industry. Their advantage is that they own or control the space where they release their fragrance. Coca-Cola has been playing with prototypes of scented Point-of-Sale installations for over 10 years, only they need the cooperation of the stores they are in.

So why don’t we see more “Scent Marketing” efforts? For one, because it’s ROI is so difficult to define. Detailed numbers and success stories are hard to come by or highly anecdotal or just not publicly shared. Also, nobody wants to be accused of “stinking up the place” and of a lack of compassion towards those

with chemical hypersensitivities, medical conditions or other scent-induced problems.

The solution is – again - “control”. Of the appropriateness, the intensity of a scent and if a customer wants to be exposed to the experience or not. Once these basic rules are observed you are in good shape and you can scent have go to work for you: In consumer testing, scented products have routinely been considered of higher value (the sneaker offered in scented versus an unscented store) and better quality (scented versus unscented toilet paper). Scent impacts the perception of time passing (gamblers linger longer at the slot machines) and space, which does not turn a smallish hotel room into a suite but at least makes it feel like it's worth the money.

In my next post on this topic I will focus on designing the right scent for your brand and on how to convince a manufacturer to actually make it for you.

APRIL 22, 2008

Creating the Signature Scent

Creating a “signature” scent for a brand’s scent marketing purposes is not much different from translating the persona of a celebrity or the ideas of a designer into a fragrance. In the “fine fragrance” (the perfumes and eau de toilettes) category alone, 1,000+ new scents are launched worldwide every year. It requires a lot of creativity and even more marketing dollars to bring - and keep - them on the consumer’s radar screen. Often times, fragrance launches are a very public affair, comparable to the premiere of a future blockbuster movie. And, like the movies, they often fizzle and disappear as quickly as they came...

As a brand owner taking the leap of faith into scent marketing, you want to do it right. So you hire a scent marketing consultant and she will help you develop a “fragrance brief”. It describes in detail what you want your brand to smell like and draws from inspirations such as brand image, corporate identity, core values, in-store design, color schemes, customer demographics and preferences, sometimes even the owners’ personal taste.

If you were in the fine fragrance business (like Estee Lauder or COTY) your consultant would take the brief to a number of fragrance manufacturers, most of which you probably never heard of; Givaudan, IFF, Firmenich, Symrise, Taksasgo to name the five largest. With an extensive staff of in-house perfumers they translate your “fragrance brief” into a scent and present you with the results. You narrow them down, maybe run some market research, make some modifications, shoot a beautiful ad campaign and you’re off to the store shelves. The “creative”, the perfumer’s work, by the way, you would get for free. It’s a well-oiled machine, which in the end produces large amounts of “juice”, fragrances often described as “emotions in a bottle”. And those manufacturers who didn’t win the brief will try again (and win) next time.

But since you are an airline, a consumer electronics brand or a car manufacturer, those traditional rules and processes do not apply.

Your scent marketing consultant better be well connected to a world-class perfumer who can think “outside the bottle” and deliver the appropriate translation of your brand into a signature scent. Once this scent is formulated – increasingly this involves throwing in a couple of flavor components - you need to find a manufacturer to produce the fairly small quantities (usually around 500 kilo a batch) that an IFF wouldn’t make for you. By the way, the “creative” for a signature scent can run between \$25K and \$100K, the fragrance oil anywhere between \$35 and \$75 per kilo. So, unless being associated with your brand has a major PR value for the fragrance manufacturer, be prepared to pay for the creative upfront and to guarantee the minimum quantities they demand.

Another option is a “library scent”, often the result of various trial-and-error or rejection processes every perfumer and manufacturer goes through over the years. It wouldn’t be designed especially for you but it would save you the creative cost and you would only have to pay for the bulk. However, finding the fragrance that matches your initial brief from tens of thousands of library scents out there is looking for the proverbial needle in the haystack. Get ready to face lots of small bottles and have your consultant pre-select them or at least categorize them. There’s only so much a nose can handle...

As so often, there’s a major “buyer beware”: Don’t try this on the cheap! Whenever a substance is released into the open there are health and safety concerns – apart from some people’s assumption that a scent can make you do anything, including buying stuff you don’t need. Which, by the way, is not true. But please get your fragrance from a manufacturer that will abide to current industry regulations, that belongs to IFRA and RIFM which are the self-regulatory bodies of the fragrance industry that conduct product testing and evaluation, and that can provide you with the necessary paperwork. A product from a back lot in China will do your brand, your customers and your staff more harm than good.

In my next installment on scent marketing I will explain the various ways to release a scent at the point of sale and in applications you may not even have thought of.

MAY 01, 2008

Scent Delivery Sense

In my previous posts I shared why you should [use scent in your marketing](#) efforts and how to [find and make the right fragrance](#) to represent your brand. Today my focus is on scent delivery.

About 10 years ago, the first commercial scent delivery systems entered the market - for use at the point of sale. What better way to identify a fragrance in a cluttered environment (such as a "Parfumerie" in Europe or a department store in the U.S.) than pushing a button and having an "intimate" scent experience that would not involve a sharp-dressed associate ambushing the consumer as she enters the floor or testers on shelves that get messy or are stolen altogether within a week.

The technology most frequently used (by companies such as the now defunct aerome GmbH from Germany) is "dry air delivery", meaning that purified air is run over or through a scented substance, picks up the fragrance and delivers it via a whiff of scented air to the potential shopper. No residue, no liquid, no alcohol, no cooling sensation on the skin. However, like so many good ideas that sound like a no-brainer it was way ahead of its time at the point of sale. With a few installations, too far spread out geographically, it attracted interest but never turned a profit.

As early as 1993, Dr. Alan Hirsch conducted experiments in casinos where he found out that revenue from slot machines went up by 45% as soon as scent was introduced in the environment. This confirmed that a scent's properties such as its influence on the perception of time and the benefit of gamblers feeling "well" had substantial commercial value. Today, not a single casino in Las Vegas and elsewhere is without a signature scent.

Those large spaces required powerful delivery systems since the desired experience no longer was "intimate" but had to be all encompassing. AromaSys emerged as the leader in the category with sophisticated equipment that basically vaporizes fragrance oils by applying high voltage (how it works exactly is a company secret). The resulting vapor is then infused into the HVAC system where it travels via the appropriate ducts and saturates even the largest spaces over time. The casino and hospitality business has become one of the most profitable and, subsequently, most fought over category - sometimes with multiple scent delivery units per location.

Currently, most systems are equipped with a nebulizer enclosed in a shoe-box size housing from providers such as Prolitec and Air Aroma, that disperses fragrance oils as mist of micron-sized particles that – again – either travel via HVAC system or via any ambient airflow. Since they work with the original fragrance oils, they provide the truest representation of what the brand marketer had in mind – and paid for.

However, dry air delivery systems – such as ScentAir's – maintain a strong presence in the marketplace due to their low cost and simple maintenance. Since they store scent in a solid form it wears off with the top note going first, the middle note next until only the base note remains – unless the scent cartridge is replaced as recommended by the manufacturer.

In all cases the business model is “razor & blade” with the “razor” being fairly inexpensive at \$100-150/month and the refills not only generating the repeat business but also the bigger profit margins.

“Whatever happened at the point of sale” you may ask. Well, here's where you can measure the immediate reward from scent marketing. How many customers bought a different brand of pizza because they could experience the scent of the finished product? How many customers switched to a new brand of toothpaste because they could experience a new aroma via scented packaging or a scented display? There are objections from the retailers: What will our store smell like if we let every brand do their “smelly thing”? Would our customers find such marketing too intrusive? Would it disturb our store management and replenishing system? Who installs, maintains and removes the devices? Once WalMart or a Target invites them in, the economy of scale that will make point of sale systems affordable. This will lead to the resurgence of simpler dry air delivery systems. There is already great progress made in printable scents that can use coupons or cardboard packaging as carriers.

One caveat remains: ALWAYS, allow the customer control over the exposure to scent. Some of us do not like it; some of us have allergies or worse. As long as brand marketers respect these concerns and limitations, scent marketing is a great way to educate and entertain the consumer.

And by the way, the **SCENTworld CONFERENCE & EXPO 2008** in New York will discuss and present the latest trends in scent marketing as they apply for a variety of industries. It is an exciting and widely unexplored field that yields tremendous opportunities.

AUGUST 05, 2008

Scent Marketing Success: Step 1 of 10

1) Understand the potential of scent

The sense of smell is the strongest of all human senses. It reminds us of experiences – good and bad – we may have had decades ago. Scent travels straight to the limbic system in our brain – which is responsible for memory and emotion.

For marketing purposes, scents have proven to work well in two areas:

- The Cognitive, in which they make us recognize a product and trigger a desire or memory that may end up in a decision or a purchase. The ideal application is to stop a passer-by by projecting that product's scent into her path. Consumer research shows that once a scent is dispersed, related products are perceived of higher quality and value. For instance a scented toilet paper was perceived softer than the identical, unscented version.
- The Emotional, in which scents make us feel comfortable, "at home", influencing our perception of the passing of time (slower in a scented environment as proven in Las Vegas casinos) and space (a scented room is perceived larger than an unscented room). Scent can generate an environment where we like to stay longer and consume more.

The key potential of scent marketing for a brand is the lasting association of a scent with a certain event or environment. Evoking a positive sensory experience with your brand can give your product or service an edge in a sea of consumer choices.

AUGUST 15, 2008

Scent Marketing Success: Step 2 of 10

2) Define your brands "Whiff Factor"

In the context of multi-sensory marketing, audio and visual stimuli combined account for 87% of a brand's communication with the consumer. The next best option is to exploit the olfactory properties of your product. Touch and taste, the remaining two senses, apply to an even lesser degree to most brands and products.

Think about what you already have included in your marketing plan and a scent marketing consultant will be able to explain (and execute) how you can use scent to enhance your:

- Marketing collateral (business cards, stationary, brochures)
- Promotional items

- Promotional events & trade shows
- Affinity cards/credit cards
- Gift certificates/redemption programs
- Print advertising/banners/signage
- Point of Purchase displays/in-store displays/digital signage
- Product manufacturing
- Product packaging
- Environments (retail space/lobbies/offices/waiting rooms)

If you have a product with a scent (think Starbucks) you may already cover some of those areas but in many cases there is much more left that you can do to maximize consumer impact through scent. If your product does not inherently have a scent a carefully designed signature scent may be a key differentiating opportunity in your category.

I'll explore how to create a signature scent in step 3 here on BSI.

SEPTEMBER 16, 2008

Scent Marketing Success: Step 3 of 10

Continuing our [series](#) on scent marketing we come to number 3 - designing the perfect scent.

Creating the appropriate scent requires profound olfactory knowledge and sophisticated technology. Both can be found at big flavor and fragrance houses of which there are about 5 in the world. However, some of the smaller scent industry players are suited to meet your demands in smaller quantities as well. Early in the process you will be asked for a "fragrance brief", so be prepared to explain your brand properties and values as well as your target demographics. A talented perfumer will be able to translate those into a scent and present you with a selection of creative ideas in sample form. These "Signature Scents" will become your brand's property and can cost anywhere between \$25,000 and \$100,000. They are the more expensive alternative to "library scents" that are already developed and waiting for the right customer in the scent manufacturer's archives.

Most scents (with Chanel No 5 having been the first in the 1920's) are a synthetic representation of reality. There is simply not enough natural vanilla, rose and lavender available to satisfy market needs at an affordable rate. By no means are synthetic scents less realistic than natural ones or even dangerous. Natural scents are available but their cost/benefit ratio is still unclear.

Cooked food scents (so called "savory" scents) are the most difficult to produce since the perfumer not only needs to have access to flavors but in many cases also has to consider the effect of heat on the "real" scent of, say, coffee, baked bread, barbecue sauce or a steak.

OCTOBER 24, 2008

Scent Marketing Success: Step 4 of 10

Continuing our [series](#) on scent marketing we come to number 4 - understanding the rules and regulations of scent marketing.

For over 30 years, the manufacturing process for flavors and fragrances has been guided by the Fragrance & Flavor industry's instruments of self-regulation. Those are:

- [RIFM](#) (Research Institute for Fragrance Materials, Inc.) which evaluates the safety of fragrance ingredients and where all of the reputable fragrance manufacturers and consumer goods companies that sell scented and flavored products are members.
- [IFRA](#) (International Fragrance Association) issues standards based on the conclusion of RIFM's work that can restrict or completely ban the use of a certain ingredient. Those standards are distributed within IFRA's membership, among major customer associations in the U.S., Europe and Asia as well as other stakeholders and published on the organization's public web site.

Any marketer and brand owner would be well advised to work with a manufacturer that belongs to those organizations. While membership has a price (an average of \$100K/year) it also buys the peace of mind (and the paperwork and documentation that comes with it) that an unrecognized company in China or Eastern Europe would not be able to provide.

However, for scent delivery systems (those that disperse the fragrances into the open) no such regulating bodies exist. It is an industry busy with its own growth that still needs to establish safety standards and risk management procedures. [The Scent Marketing Institute](#), as the public face and voice of the industry, works with its members and the public on grassroots efforts to establish a similar "safety net" for the category.

In the meantime, allow the customer control over the exposure to scent. Some of us do not like it; some of us have allergies or worse. As long as brand marketers respect these concerns and limitations, scent marketing is a great way to educate and entice the consumer.

Courtesy of Harald Vogt, Scent Marketing Institute

Scent Marketing Success: Step 5 of 10

Our [series](#) on scent marketing continues with number 5 - The importance of investing in consumer research.

After an advertising agency puts the results of their creative labor in front of a client, one or even several rounds of consumer research usually follows.

Corporate marketers in general are risk averse and want to make sure that they are making the best decisions. Unbeknownst to most consumers, fragrance marketers such as Estée Lauder, L'Oréal and COTY do the same before they launch a new fragrance.

When it comes to scent marketing, only recently the Scent Marketing Institute has proposed similar protocols for the “non traditional” users of fragrances, such as brands engaged in scent marketing. Often, in the scent-design process decisions are made based on key executives’ personal preferences, trust in the perfumer’s expertise or after cutting the creative process short because of budget concerns. But how does the scent resonate with employees and staff exposed to it for long working hours and the customer walking into the store?

It sounds like a no-brainer that any brand should look into these questions and apply at least some of the methods (perception testing, benchmarking) currently available. Is the scent perceived pleasant in general? Is it too strong and overpowering or too weak? Is it “congruent”, meaning matching the customers’ expectation? Research shows that a scent perceived as “feminine” turns off male customers, that a coconut scent released in winter confuses everybody – unless you walk into a travel agency promoting summer vacations.

Scent Marketing Success: Step 6 of 10

Our [series](#) on scent marketing continues with number 6 - Finding the right delivery technology.

The end product of any perfumer’s creative process is an oil - sometimes called “Fragrance Oil” or “Essential Oil”. Now you need a way to get it out into the open, either rather restricted at the Point of Sale or on a grand scale in a retail store or an event space. Stay away from any scent delivery systems that applies heat to the fragrance oil, not only for safety reasons but also as not to alter the scent’s characteristics. In fact, professional commercial equipment is quite different from home devices you would buy in the local drugstore or online.

Scent is typically delivered in four ways:

- Dry air scent delivery. Fragrance oil is embedded in a gel, in small plastic beads or in another scent-saturated substance and air is run over or through the substance, picking up the scent and delivering it via a small blower or a fan. This method is very efficient at the Point of Sale since the scent’s reach can be limited to the immediate environment.
- Nebulization: Pure fragrance oil in its liquid form is run through a venturi device that disperses the oil into extremely fine particles that then are picked up either by ambient air flow or infused into the HVAC system. These particles are 100 times smaller than what comes from a fragrance spray bottle and therefore linger longer before they dissolve without sticking to carpets, wall coverings, products in the store or the customer walking by.
- Ionization: A sophisticated and technically complicated way to break the oil into small particles by applying high voltage.

- Microencapsulation: Mainly used to make a scent printable. Fragrance molecules are wrapped into a substance (encapsulated) that breaks when a certain pressure or friction is applied. The best examples are the ScentStrips® in magazines or scented varnish that can be applied in any mainstream printing process.

There are a handful of manufacturers for each category. A well educated scent marketing consultant would be able to guide you towards the right solution. [The Scent Marketing Institute](#) maintains a full blown database on every existing and future technology.

Courtesy of Harald Vogt, Scent Marketing Institute

Scent Marketing Success: Step 7 of 10

Our [series](#) on scent marketing continues with number 7 - Understanding your cost and the Return on Investment

It is important that you understand and define your needs before you even try to run the numbers on your scent marketing efforts.

- Do you need a signature scent (development cost: \$25K - \$125K)?
- How large is the environment you need to deliver the scent in? A point of Sale application requires a different (cheaper, \$5 - \$50 one time cost per unit) solution than large space scenting via the HVAC system (\$100 - \$250 per unit per month)
- How many units would you need to sufficiently deliver scent in one outlet? It is highly recommended that you figure this out before you sign a contract with any equipment manufacturer. The impact on your monthly expense can be dramatic. Multiply that by the number of outlets and you have your monthly "hardware" expense.
- Probe your supplier for installation requirements and service/support levels. How easy is it to replace the containers for the consumables? Can it be done by store personnel?
- What is your cost of consumables? Are they included in the monthly rental fee you pay to the equipment manufacturer or do you have scent delivered from a third party?

Answering these questions will help you set up your scent marketing budget. For a large brand the cost will fairly insignificant, the challenge here will be to create and justify a new budget category. For a smaller enterprise, or if you are trying to promote sales of minor-ticket items, the cost factor may be prohibitive unless you make an effort to find an appropriately low-cost technology solution.

Numbers on the Return of Investment are kept very close by the existing scent marketers and are not publicly available. The Scent Marketing Institute has a database of current initiatives that can be exploited when making the case for a brand extension via scent.

Courtesy of Harald Vogt, Scent Marketing Institute

Scent Marketing Success: Step 8 of 10

Our [series](#) on scent marketing continues with number 8 - Commit to your scent marketing program

Believe it or not, the main hindrance to successful scent marketing is poor tracking.

Evaluating the “before-during-after” scenario is crucial but often neglected. If you use, say, scent marketing to promote the sales of flowers in a supermarket then you have to capture (over a certain time period) and record the sales in the unscented environment. Then do the same during the scented period. For curiosity’s sake you may discontinue the use of scent altogether and see what happens. Were you able to successfully lay a scent track to the flower department? Did you generate loyalty and repeat purchases? How about playing with the price? Can you maintain an increase? There are plenty of scenarios you can play as long as your store and inventory management is plugged in.

You may want to push scent through your front door the same way some stores blow cold air on the sidewalk on a steamy day. A simple electronic people counter on the door can tell you if you were successful in doing so. Now the traffic is there, what do you do with it? Unless you have enough sales staff or product on hand you will not be able to increase your sales and capitalize on your scent marketing effort. You may even end up with a frustrated consumer.

Unless you keep close tabs on the results you will never find out if scent marketing makes sense for you. It would not be fair to give it a bad name only because efficiency has not been measured. The biggest issue with installed systems is not reliability of the delivery system itself but that the consumables are not replaced as required. Once you have made a commitment you need to stay with it and instruct your staff accordingly so they do not see it as a nuisance but an important component of your marketing.

Courtesy of Harald Vogt, Scent Marketing Institute