

# Ambient Scenting Research

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## What every retailer should know about the way into the shopper's head

**Summary:** Retail sector companies often overlook the positive contribution psychology could make to their success. At a time when more decisions than ever are made in-store, any media must provide a pathway to the purchase that is subconsciously triggered and therefore it would be a wise move to spend more on below-the-line and through-the-line strategies. A key challenge is to create an environment where the shopper perceives a one-to-one relationship with the store; to optimise the shopper's time; to make it appear as if the ranging, and categorisation of products has been personalised just for them; and by attention to this, retailers will deliver an experience the shopper will want to repeat. So what is the smartest technique to pinpoint what they really want?

Smell is the quickest way into the brain. According to research by Spangenberg et al. (1996), the use of aromatic (experiential) marketing solutions can impact positively on behaviour in-store. Customers perceived that they were in the store for less time when pleasant aromas were used and they also found it improved:

- the perception of customers as to the evaluation of the store;
- the perception of customers as to the store's environment;
- the perception of customers as to the merchandise;
- the perception of customers as to specific products;
- the intentions of customers to visit the store; and purchase intentions for specific products.

Some scents are purported to have positive effects to reinforce the brand, engage customers and provide other beneficial effects on shopper mood and demand. The following provides some examples:

- Sweet basil – lifts mood, improves mental clarity and memory;
- Bay – relieves nervous exhaustion and melancholy;
- Sage – relieves stress, guilt and hostility;
- Clove – aphrodisiac qualities and relieves fatigue;
- Ginger – relieves confusion, loneliness and anxiety;
- Grapefruit – uplifts, energises and refreshes;
- Lemon – balances, refreshes, uplifts, relieves distrust and apathy;
- Lime – cheers, uplifts and purifies;
- Nutmeg – invigorates and stimulates the mind, improves self-image and an aphrodisiac;
- Sweet orange – brightens mood, calms and reduces stress, relieves apathy and worry;
- Peppermint – energises, brightens mood, relieves shock, apathy and helplessness;
- Tangerine – soothes and calms nerves, relaxes, heals inner issues and emotional trauma; and
- Vanilla – relieves stress, anxiety and calms (source: Lempert, 2002).

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**Conclusion:** People are making more shopping trips and spending less time in each store. In addition, most purchase decisions are now made at the point of sale and shoppers need to be presented with a pathway to the purchase triggered at the point of sale. Hence it would be a wise move to spend more on below-the-line and through-the-line strategies. As most in-store behaviour is carried out in subconscious mode, customers are unable to explain their purchase decisions and hence a different measure of behaviour is required.

Many faux pas continue to be made despite much evidence from psychology professionals – all of which should flag an ALERT for the smart retailer. The challenge is to create an environment where the shopper perceives a one-to-one relationship with the store, to optimise the shopper’s time, and to deliver an experience the shopper will want to repeat. By addressing these challenges, the win for the shopper is time efficiency; for the retailer it is increased loyalty; and for the brand, an uplift in sales.

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**Published:** *International Journal of Retail and Distribution Management*, 2003

**Web Link:** <http://www.emeraldinsight.com/journals.htm?articleid=857449>

**Short Link:** <http://bit.ly/15VyBmj>

**Citation:** Brenda Soars, (2003) “What every retailer should know about the way into the shopper’s head”, *International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management*, Vol. 31 Iss: 12, pp.628 – 637