

Q&A

Scentbird creates perfume playground for millennial women

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Scentbird fragrance subscription service

By JEN KING

Purchasing fragrances can be a daunting task for consumers due to the high number of options as the industry sector has become oversaturated with reinterpretations and new scents.

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Subscription fragrance service Scentbird aims to eliminate the guess work and create an easier ecommerce experience when purchasing a fragrance by working with luxury brands to provide samples to consumers prior to committing to the purchase of a full-size bottle. Since fragrances are a personal and emotional selection, a consumer may not be able to truly experience the scent in-store and may not be able to tell if daily wear would match their style and personality through a test spray provided by an associate on their skin or a paper sample.

“Personalization and recommendation are key,” said Rachel ten Brink, CMO and co-founder of **Scentbird**, New York. “When a consumer goes to a store, she is faced with a wall of perfumes and staff that often knows little about perfume. The average beauty associate gets just two hours of fragrance training.

“We offer a very different approach to perfume discovery,” she said. “Our site is specifically designed to cater to a broad range of women, we don’t limit ourselves to “perfumistas” but rather aim to make perfume accessible.”

In this Q&A, Ms. ten Brink discusses fragrance marketing tactics, how brands who partner with Scent Bird can measure ROI and the power of reviews and recommendations.



Rachel ten Brink of Scentbird

Here is the dialogue:

How does Scentbird differ from other subscription-based sample services?

Scentbird is the evolution of subscription-commerce: 'Netflix for Perfumes.' We give consumers choice, but help them navigate the assortment with recommendations that are just the right for them.

This is particularly important for perfume since scent preferences are extremely personal and subjective. We on-board consumers through a quiz, and give them targeted recommendations based on our algorithm of 500,000 authentic reviews. This allows the customer to easily navigate the dizzying array of perfumes available in the market today. You can keep customizing the recommendations by rating perfumes: the more you rate, the better your recommendations become.

Our key differentiators are choice and product offering: consumers can pick any of the 350 designer and niche perfumes in our assortment each month and receive our exclusive, sleek purse spray with the fragrance they’ve selected.

What do you feel was missing from fragrance ecommerce before Scentbird was established?

The idea of Scentbird was born over a year ago. We started running ‘perfume tastings’ in New York as a way to help women learn about scent and discover what they loved. We wanted to bring this to a broader audience but realized that less than 9 percent of fragrances are being bought online today (mostly re-buying scents you already owned).

Meanwhile, the experience of shopping in-store is so challenging: the pushy salespeople and lack of education, not to mention your nose physically shuts down after you smell a 3-4 perfumes in a row and that perfume takes time to develop. Our objective was to create a perfume playground- geared specifically towards millennial women: we believe perfume should be indulgent, personalized and most of all, fun.



Scentbird promotional image

How will the Scentbird service help consumers make better informed and educated purchases?

Recommending perfumes is key to Scentbird. Women are overwhelmed by the amount of choice in the marketplace (in 1970, 90 new perfumes were launched; last year, over 2,000 new fragrance launched). However, the number one reason women buy perfume is to get something new or different. Our recommendation engine makes it easy.

Once you've chosen a fragrance, spending \$80 or more on a scent you've never smelled is too risky for most women. Scentbird offers a low-risk alternative for just \$14.95/month.

Even if consumers go to a store to smell a fragrance, we are firmly in the camp that you must live with a scent for a while before making it part of your perfume wardrobe. Our purse spray gives consumers time to fully experience and fall in love with the perfume.

In what ways will a subscription appeal to an aspirational consumer?

For many consumers, perfume is an high-ticket beauty purchase that is carefully considered. Scentbird offers the opportunity to "fall in love with the scent" before having to commit to a full bottle.

Why are consumer peer reviews so essential to the Scentbird service?

Our algorithm is based on real women's reviews, so peer reviews are central to our recommendations. Extensive research has shown millennial women in particular trust peer recommendations much more than advertising.



Scentbird interface on iPad

What touchpoints are used to recommend fragrances to subscribers?

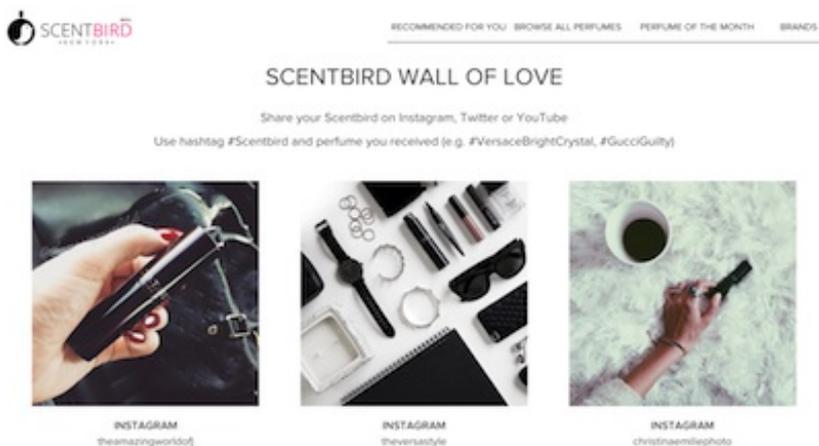
Our approach combines analytics with highly visual design. There is some serious technology behind Scentbird. Our proprietary algorithm, TruScent powers our perfume recommendations leveraging a database of thousands of scent profiles and 500,000 reviews by real women. We match you to scents you'll love based on real women's recommendations, not what manufacturers select for the consumer.

We also want women to instantly understand what each fragrance is about. Thus, every scent is accompanied by icons that tell you where to wear the perfume (office, date night), what type of fragrance it is (sweet, fresh) and how you will feel when wearing it (classy, sexy). We include pictures of notes so you can better imagine the smell.

How can brands measure the ROI through Scentbird?

Scentbird delivers value in multiple ways. We are an exploration platform for perfumes where consumers can effectively be converted into ecommerce. Additionally, we reach highly influential, social and connected customers. Our demographics speak to the millennial consumer: 48 percent of our customers are 25-34 and 24 percent are 18-24.

Finally, we have access to a lot of data. We can tell you what other perfumes she already wears, what else she's interested in trying. We can also test new concepts and scents. We communicate constantly with our community and they love to give us feedback.



Scentbird's Wall of Love, a user-generated gallery on its Web site

If the consumer does want to commit to a full-size bottle can it be purchased directly through Scentbird? If not, how do you direct the consumer to the brand?

We launched a few months ago and are currently focused on building our subscription base. Our customers are constantly asking to purchase full bottles, and we will be offering ecommerce shortly.

The fragrance market is saturated – how does Scentbird aim to remedy how fragrances are marketed to overwhelmed consumers?

Personalization and recommendation are key. When a consumer goes to a store, she is faced with a wall of perfumes and staff that often knows little about perfume. The average beauty associate gets just two hours of fragrance training.

We offer a very different approach to perfume discovery. Our site is specifically designed to cater to a broad range of women, we don't limit ourselves to 'perfumistas' but rather aim to make perfume accessible.

How has your team been marketing Scentbird? How can brands get involved?

Our marketing approach is focused on two key strategies: influencers and brand partnerships. Social media influencers, in particular YouTubers, have played a key role in building awareness for Scentbird. It has been very exciting to receive so much support from the vlogger community.

Brand partnerships are also very important. We have partnered with fragrance brands to promote their products and introduce new fragrances, as well as worked with like-minded brands such as Isabel + Chloe and Le Tote to help build awareness.

What does Scentbird have in store for the future?

We are working on a new addition to our fragrance portfolio - The Vault. The Vault is a curated collection of unique, rare, niche and artisanal scents that will be available to our VIP subscribers. These are true gems in perfumery – containing pure essential oils, exceptional scents, and definitely not your average fruity-florals. This will be beyond exciting when we launch it.

Final Take

Jen King, lead reporter on Luxury Daily, New York

Embedded Video: <https://www.youtube.com/embed/dg6mw5oI3uQ>

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