

MARKETING

Multi-sensory stimulation promotes purchases and loyalty alike

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St. Regis scented candle

By FORREST CARDAMENIS

NEW YORK The smell of a store or product and the music used in videos should not be an afterthought, according to panelists at Fashion-Culture-Design on June 9.

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Both sound and scent have strong ties to emotion, allowing brands to generate and later exploit sensory associations. The smell of a car or the music played in a store can evoke strong memories that urge a consumer on with a transaction, providing a subliminal call to action that also creates brand loyalty.

"Scent and emotion live in the same part of the brain, so when you smell something you feel a certain way," said Dawn Goldworm, founder and scent director of 12.29. "When you smell it again you automatically remember how you feel about it.

"The first time you experience new car smell you are excited not because of the smell, but because you have a new car," she said. "But that smell that's there becomes linked to the feeling of excitement, so when the smell goes away, what do you do?"

"You go get a new car! Not that the car has changed, but the smell will bring back the feeling of excitement."

Common scents

To begin the session, audience members were polled on whether or not they notice if a restaurant is too noisy. Nearly 90 percent responded that they do.

Showing the impact this can have on a business, moderator James Truman, a restaurateur and former Cond Nast editorial director, said that to quell a noise problem at his restaurant, an acoustic ceiling was installed. Results were apparent immediately: diners stayed at their tables longer, owing to the more pleasant environment.

The sense of smell is equally powerful, as it is fully developed in 12-week-old fetus and remains the dominant sense until the child is around 10 years old, when sight begins to overtake him. Smells from those first 10 years become related to memory, and consumers will be particularly drawn if these scents can be harnessed.

The same is true of music. Music triggers memories and takes the listener out of time, and the memory association or mood of the music can play a role in product purchasing.

"It's very hard to explain the power of music," said Henri Scars Struck, founder of creative agency The Other Side of

The Brain. "Everybody processes a song differently, at different times of the day also, but we know what it can create especially with memory, and in different spaces.

"In a retail experience, you hear that song and you that makes you happy, and it changes your mind," he said.

By the same token, having upbeat, empowering music in a fitting room could make a customer think that he or she looks better in a garment.



BMW i3

BMW is harnessing these possibilities, particularly with scent. The automaker offers a number of scents from which the driver can choose, offering subtle alterations that can nevertheless have a profound impact on the consumer's experience.

"We're bombarded every day by clutter, by chaos and the overload of information," said Echo Kao, designer at BMW Designworks. "What we want to do is bring out the simplicity in the products.

"By doing that, we really focus our attention on appreciating the little things," she said. "Just a simple thing of you, in the driver's seat, touching the steering wheel and that sense of the mosquito bite-free leather smooth to the touch; you are in control, and connecting with the engineers behind these materials to bring out that experience."

Sensory exploration

Research has also shown the significance that multi-sensory experiences have on consumers.

As marketers look to effectively appeal to consumers, a report by the Shullman Research Center revealed that a strategy that takes all five senses into consideration is the best approach.

Sight may be the most important sense, ranked highest by 84 percent of consumers, but the other four also play a major role in consumers' purchasing decisions and perception of a brand. Luxury brands in particular should take note of the senses outside of sight, as luxury buyers have less of a focus on sight than those who do not indulge in luxury ([see story](#)).

Brands are experimenting with multi-sensory marketing initiatives to engage consumers in a more sophisticated way.

For example, last month Italian fashion label Fendi asked consumers to listen with their eyes to discover its latest eyewear collection.

To promote its Eyeshine sunglasses, Fendi is teaming with French-Canadian singer-songwriter Batrice Martin, stage name Couer de Pirate, on an audio visual exploration of the metallic styles. Through this effort, Fendi engages more than consumers' sight to help them make a selection ([see story](#)).

"I think we crave the real," The Other Side of The Brain's Mr. Struck said. "With all this tech we all use a lot which is great when we are exposed to something that is unexpected, that's something rare.

"You are trying to create that with scent, with music," he said. "How precious is a memory? We live a very fast life, and if there's something that comes to you that's linked to a brand or company, it becomes loyalty."