

Subject: Fragrance, the next frontier in sensory marketing

## Are you paying attention to the scent?

### How your product smells can have a profound affect on sales

“How does it smell?” is a question marketers are increasingly asking about the way consumers judge their products. For many things such as perfumes, personal care and home cleaning products, careful thought goes into the selection of fragrances that are part of the product’s formulation.

A major laundry detergent manufacturer knew that fragrance was important to consumers but a key insight was uncovered when, through Active Observational Research, women were observed unloading wet clothes from the washer. The fragrance of the detergent in the wet clothes provides a subconscious cue of cleanliness. In other words, the consumer smelled the clothes to determine if they were clean before drying them.

Personal care products like bar soaps and hand lotions also have certain “moments” where fragrance has different meanings. In the case of lotion, it must be appealing when the shopper evaluates the product initially, or she won’t even try it. Second, it must alter her environment to the extent that it provides a pleasurable experience when she applies it and finally, it must provide a lingering scent that compliments the clothing and cosmetics that she is wearing.

Evidence suggests that manipulation of fragrance to influence consumer behavior is growing to include some unexpected products in both retail and use environments to attract buyers and nurture brand identities. Recently, *Fast Company* magazine reported the opening of a Samsung showroom in Manhattan where a “new electronics” scent was artificially piped into the retail space to give the store that new technology feel. Through observation, it was noticed that shoppers spent more time in the store compared with other locations that did not have the fragrance, and that extra time might well result in increased purchase.

Likewise, Rolls Royce has painstakingly “decoded” the fragrance of their classic Bentley to ensure that future generations of this car replicate those made decades ago. It turns out there are over 200 components to this fragrance, making it a vital component that distinguishes this car in the super-luxury category.

Thinking of capitalizing on scent to influence sales? Current research provides some direction:

- Understand how fragrance fits in to your consumer’s decision criteria. Is it one dimensional (“like” vs. “repulsion”), or are there other subtle influences of fragrance as in the case of laundry detergents or that new car smell?
- Fragrances should be aligned with gender and demographics. Adults born prior to 1930 have affinity for nature-based scents such as apple, warm bread and vanilla. Those born later grew up with manufactured fragrances like Crayola crayons and Play-Doh.

- Less is more. Intense fragrances might help get your product or service noticed, but increase the risk of repulsive backlash.
- For product categories like food, detergents and personal care, think long and hard before changing the scent when extending the line. New and improved product benefits just might be overshadowed by changes made to a fragrance that is iconic to the core brand.

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### **The Caney Group LLC**

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email: [info@caneygroup.com](mailto:info@caneygroup.com)

phone: 800-666-9550

web: <http://www.caneygroup.com>

The Caney Group LLC | 731 Main Street | Monroe | CT | 06468