

# Does it Make Sense to Use Scent Marketing?

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## Abstract

According to *Advertising Age Magazine*, scent marketing has been given the prestigious status as one of the top ten trends to watch in 2007. Experts also suggest that 2007 may be known as the “year of the scent.” Figures seem to support this prediction. According to the Scent Marketing Institute, which opened its doors in 2005, the scent marketing industry is currently estimated to be worth \$40 to \$60 million, but will increase substantially over the next decade to \$500 million to \$1 billion.

So why the sudden focus on scent? The main reason scent is being used as a key strategic tool instead of an afterthought by more and more firms is because research suggests that the majority of our emotions and memories are generated by smell, as opposed to our other senses, including visual cues. And because our knowledge of consumer behavior is a key to successful product introductions and sales, as well as retail and event experiences, scent has become one of the last pieces of the puzzle that has not been overexposed, yet.

Interestingly, the average person is able to recognize approximately 10,000 different odors and on average, people can recall smells with 65 percent accuracy after one year. In comparison, visual recall of photos is only 50 percent after just three months. Also interestingly, favorite childhood smells vary based on your age. Those born before 1930 are more nostalgic about natural smells like grass and trees, whereas as those born after 1930 lean more toward artificial smells like play-doh and crayons. Thus, it is important to target smells to the right product and target market. For example, women prefer scents like vanilla while men prefer spicy scents. Marketers are also likely to use different scents in different countries. The Japanese, for example, are partial to apple scents.

Scent has long been used as part of the marketing mix of many products and retailers. Just think of Coppertone Suntan Oil or a Starbucks. In particular, casinos began using scent marketing as early as 1991 in order to keep gamblers in their casinos longer and thus, spend more money. Now scent is being used by hotel chains (W Hotels recently tested a new signature fragrance), airlines (Singapore Airlines is known for its scented towels), retail stores (Samsung is testing a signature fragrance), and realtors (cookie or pie scents are used to help sell homes). Because scent is a key to a consumer's perception of the product or service, there appears to be an endless number of uses for this unique aspect of the marketing mix.

In this presentation, I will discuss the evolution of the use of scent marketing, why it is being used, and who plans to jump on this bandwagon. I will also provide information about the latest research linking scent to consumer shopping experiences.