

Making Connections

IFF's BrandEmotions marries fragrance and brand identity

Human olfactory receptors connect directly to the emotional core of the human brain, the limbic system. So it's no wonder that IFF's approach to fragrance development looks into ways to connect brands with scent, thus making emotional bonds with consumers. Fragranced textiles, packaging and retail environments are all part of IFF's scent-branding initiatives, moving past traditional categories such as fine fragrances and oral care into new frontiers. We recently spoke with IFF's chief marketing officer, Joe Faranda, about the company's BrandEmotions capability and how fragrance's role is expanding into this new arena.

P&F: Can you briefly explain the concept of scent branding? In what ways can fragrance make or strengthen connections between brands and consumers?

Faranda: If you look in terms of branding and traditional marketing, most marketers really are not leveraging all of the senses. They are primarily using visual, auditory and tactile cues to position the brand and demonstrate what the brand is all about. We [IFF] believe a whole new frontier has been emerging in terms of using the sense of smell and olfaction to really signal brand positioning and to create emotional cues about the brand that will resonate with the consumer. We have been doing research on the emotional connections between fragrance and consumers for more than 20 years, and so we believe this idea is very important. The sense of smell is the one sense that's tied directly to the brain, in the limbic system, that controls all of our emotions and feelings. Marketers need to create an emotional connection between brands and consumers, and what better way could there be than the sense of smell.

P&F: Can you talk a little bit about IFF's recent collaboration with Samsung?

Faranda: It was a terrific experience where Samsung, as part of its overall brand

positioning effort, had hired a brand consulting firm to help the company develop a holistic program toward repositioning its brand. As a part of that, Samsung wanted to leverage the sense of smell to really enhance its brand image in the retail environment, specifically in its flagship showroom in New York City. So, we worked with the company to understand what the essence of its brand positioning is all about, and most importantly, who its target consumer is. In order to be successful at this, you really have to focus on a narrowly defined consumer target and understand what kind of emotional connections resonate with the consumers. We did a lot of work with Samsung's consumer target group—both in the demographic and psychographic perspective—to understand what its image of the brand was and its emotional connection to the brand. Then we leveraged that understanding to create a fragrance that we thought would resonate with the consumers as both symbolic of the Samsung brand as well as resonate with them emotionally. We actually tested the fragrance globally in several markets and found that not only did consumers really like the fragrance, but it really did fit the brand positioning.

Samsung did carefully controlled follow-up research, before and after the fragrance entered the store, to look at what happened in terms of consumer shopping experience. And the findings demonstrated that it really had a very positive impact; consumers rated the overall shopping experience more favorably, they visited more areas of the store, and the brand rating for Samsung was elevated when the scent was present. Consistent with other research, it not only

created a positive olfactive experience, it positively influenced what consumers do when they're shopping.

One other example is using BrandEmotions in a campaign for Foot Locker in Europe. Like I said before, scents have an emotional effect, and the Foot Locker campaign was designed to bring people back to when they were kids, getting their new shoes for school. So, we created that new sneaker smell, which Foot Locker uses in magazine advertisements and in their retail stores. The campaign actually has a visual of adults smelling their new sneakers with the same enthusiastic childlike expression. Overall, it was a really successful campaign. What we have learned is that fragrance brings people back to some of their earliest memories, and so if you can identify what those memories are, targeted to olfaction it creates that strong connection.

P&F: IFF uses this scent branding through packaging, displays and textiles. What kind of experiences have you had with that?

Faranda: We have a proprietary technology called CellEssence that involves microencapsulation, and we have been able to incorporate fragrance into all kinds of textiles. We've used this technology in clothing lines such as Puma and Nike. We also have used it in sheet sets. We have an internal proprietary database, called ScentEmotions, of more than 2,000 fragrances, accords and ingredients, and we are able to mood map what kinds of feelings are evoked by different fragrances. So, if you take linens and put a very relaxing, soothing fragrance within that, through encapsulation, our research shows that consumers have a better sleeping experience.

P&F: How is fragrance creation different on a scent branding project than, say a fine fragrance or detergent?

Faranda: It's really not different. IFF has an integrated approach to developing any fragrance. We talk about the process as having three pillars. It's basically taking our fragrance expertise and coupling it with solid brand understanding and consumer understanding. It's the integration of those three pillars that allow us to create consumer-preferred fragrances. We look at the customer's brand positioning, in terms of what their brand strategy is, based on the specific consumer target they're trying to reach. Then we conduct research with the consumers to understand what kind of emotional connections they have to the brand and what feelings and moods are going to make them respond. Finally, we use that information internally, through our ScentEmotions database, to start looking for inspiration in accords and ingredients, which are correlated with the feelings and emotions we received from our research. We pretty much approach most projects the same way.

Our goal is to help our customers win, so the more we can understand their brands and their consumer target, the better we are able to create fragrances that are consistent with their brand strategy and are going to resonate emotionally with their consumer target.

P&F: What's next in scent branding?

Faranda: I really think it's a continuation of this holistic approach to branding that leverages all of the senses. Consumers are becoming more complex and harder to reach. Their expectations are higher; they don't want just a product—they want experiences. When we talk to consumers, we can't talk in a one-dimensional way. We no longer can communicate just through print or TV advertisements. We really have to create experiences for them. So, I think we are going to see more use of the five senses in marketing in order to make brands really come alive, creating an overall experience for the consumer.

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