

# ScentWorld 2008 Report: Optimizing Consumer Experience through Fragrance

Exploring the role of fragrance in marketing and branding

Fragrances created for brands' retail and other environments don't have to be the olfactive equivalent of Muzak. Rather than blanket a space with a generic scent, perfumers, fragrance house experts and brand specialists are partnering to create innovative signature scents that transmit cues about brand personality, identity and position within the competitive landscape. In an age in which consumers are constantly bombarded with brand messages, scent presents an underutilized avenue for cutting through the noise.

At the recent ScentWorld conference in New York sponsored by the Scent Marketing Institute, a range of speakers—including perfumers, manufacturers, sensory scientists and branding experts—discussed scent's role in branding and marketing. “We are responding to the explosive growth of scent marketing across a wide range of industries,” says the Institute's founder Harald Vogt.

## Technical Hurdles

“It's not just about putting a scent continuously in the air,” says speaker Alex Moskvin (vice president of Brand Emotions, IFF), addressing the technical considerations involved in scenting spaces.

When it comes to scent communication you really only get one chance to get it right.

“Scent diffusion in the air is more like driving a boat than it is driving a car,” adds Steve Semoff (vice president, technical services, IFF). “If I have loud music in a retail environment I can flip a switch and it's gone. If I put scent into the air, and the level is too strong ... it's going to take time for it to [diminish]. When it comes to scent communication you really only get one chance to get it right.”

He adds, “Scent marketing ... involves a blend of creativity from the fragrance development standpoint, engineering expertise in terms of understanding the site where the fragrance will be diffused, and optimization of

the hardware ... we'll be using to put the fragrance into the air.” Some of the variables fragrance companies consider in optimizing scents from formulation to deployment include:

- Identifying at what point the scent has reached the detection threshold as opposed to the recognition threshold
- Alternating between two or more fragrances to avoid fatigue or anosmia
- Controlling the “pulse” of fragrance so that the aroma level in the air never stabilizes, which is also key in preventing anosmia
- Consistency of the composition
- Product degradation
- Regulatory compliance
- Delivery systems
- Budgets

“The ultimate goal is consistency of intensity and character over time and distance,” says Semoff. “If you can do that, then you've done your job well.”

## Why Scent Matters

“We're living in a very crowded marketing and communications world,” says Moskvin. “The one thing that might help [companies and consumers] is to use scent as the last frontier of branding and customer experience.”

Because fragrance bypasses traditional audio, visual and textual marketing noise by appealing directly to the limbic system, Moskvin and Semoff see an opportunity for brands to achieve a point of difference in a crowded marketplace and reach a differentiated positioning. “In the past, scent was an afterthought,” says Moskvin. Brands have traditionally employed genericized, non-customized scents that telegraphed nothing of the brands' identities. Semoff adds that diffusing the odor of chocolate chip cookies to increase sales of desserts is, now, an antiquated view of fragrance branding's potential. “We're creating signature scents for specific brands that convey an olfactive message,” he says, “That's not just picking a fragrance out of a library and throwing it into a machine. That's a fine-tuned sensory design.”



Semoff



Moskvin

Photos courtesy of IFF.

\*IFF senior perfumer Christophe Laudamiel also spoke at the event, highlighting the ways in which scent has been used across categories as a brand extension that promotes recognition and customer loyalty.

For details on next year's event, visit [scentworldexpo.com](http://scentworldexpo.com).

This sensory identity is key to creating desired customer experiences. As Moskvina puts it, scents should “speak coherently” to specific target consumers, as opposed to using a broad “shotgun approach” that provides a less potent, generalized experience.

To illustrate, he discusses IFF’s work to create a scent for Samsung’s “experience store.” “We weren’t ... creating a fragrance for everyone who walked into the store,” he says. “It was designed to resonate with a particular sweet spot target consumer.” In addition, the project focused on imparting a scent that would be noticed and recognized by consumers as opposed to using subliminal scents that might have provided a weaker signature. The effect, according to independent research cited by IFF, was to increase consumers’ browsing time, the number of products they engaged, the amount of time they spent in-store and the overall appreciation of the in-store experience, in addition to a heightened appreciation for the brand’s identity/personality.

### **What’s Next in Scent and Branding**

Moskvina has seen scent branding evolve quickly in the last few years, which has led to increased awareness in new areas. “We’re now finding architectural companies are becoming more aware of the importance of looking at sensory design and the role of scent from the outset of projects—not as an afterthought.” He adds that there is broad potential in architecture, including dispersal via


air conditioning. But there is further potential, he says, for fragrance houses to design the “air experience” in buildings, to add an olfactive experience to a structure. Semoff adds that every architectural detail from color and texture to lighting is taken into account during conception and that fragrance must be added to that core list. “Why shouldn’t you have a signature scent that completes that entire sensory experience?”

In addition to reinforcing brand identity, Moskvina believes scent can serve a functional role in air management/quality. “Scent experience can enhance, for example, the workplace in terms of encouraging a better atmospheric environment in which work takes place,” he says. Further, he notes that using fragrance in cars can provide benefits such as relaxation during stressful traffic jams. “In addition, I see opportunities in scenting large arenas, public places. We also have technology that allows us to scent plasticized materials—there are a number of different ways we can skew it.”

In whatever guise, Moskvina believes that the importance of scent in brand identity will only increase: “signature brands, signature scents.”

*Reported by Jeb Gleason-Allured, Editor;  
jallured@allured.com*

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