



Fragrancing the Functional Product

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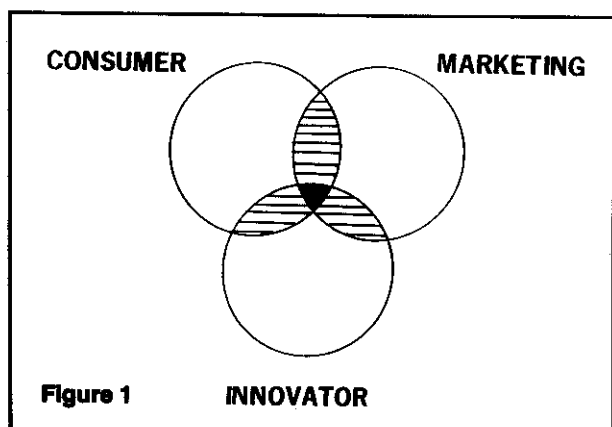
I think I will step back in time. I speak as an old-time new product developer having spent many years creating new products in accordance with old principles which, incidentally, have resulted in some major products. The name of this paper might also be retitled: *The Perfumer as New Product Developer, or Who Knows More About Perfume Than the Perfumer?*

Several years ago I published, in *Cosmetic & Toiletries*,* a paper on new product development. The major theme of that paper was the interaction of innovator, consumer and the attitude and atmosphere of the marketing company in-

involved. The situation was presented diagrammatically as in figures 1 and 2. In figure 1, we see that the new product experience can be represented by three components: (1) the consumer, (2) the innovator of the new product, and (3) the atmosphere in which the product is marketed—the market research, the concept, the advertising, the sales force, and all the other parts of an organization that determine the ability of an organization to get its message across to the consumer and the product onto the store shelf.

Only where the three circles overlap is there a marketable product. It was proposed that the key to a successful product in the marketplace was a good mesh of the three major elements, as shown in figure 2. Here, we see an example of a good fit—a situation in which there is a sizeable group of consumers to which the product appeals, an innovator who has been able to conceive and develop a very unique and appealing product, and a “normal” or “average” organizational desire and ability to introduce and sustain the product in the marketplace. The consumer is happy and the new product is a success.

Figure 3 shows what might happen however, if, for example, that new product were not innovative—just a “me too,” and marketing support is neither unusually strong nor unusually weak. The *potential* consumer group may be the same, but the new product is doomed to failure.

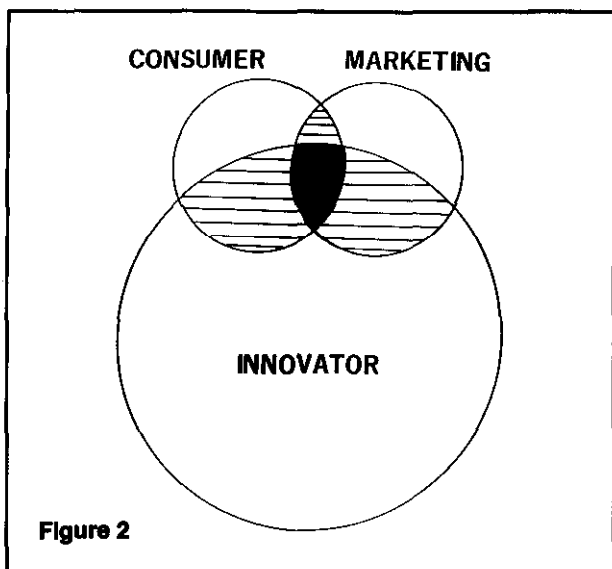


*Morton Pader, PhD, A Model to Assess New Product Development, *Cosmetics & Toiletries*, 92,45, November 1977.

The conjunction of the three essential elements shows but little overlap.

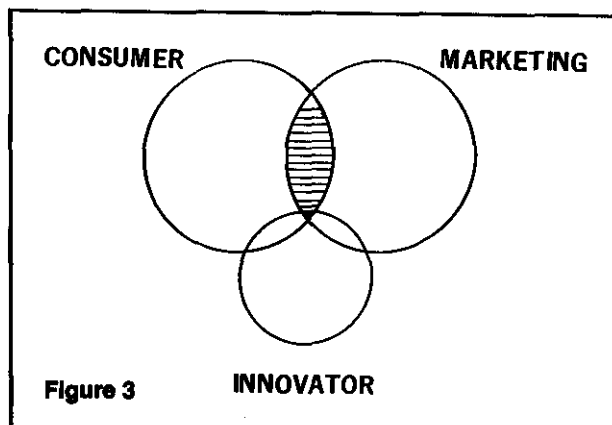
Much as some of us would like to think otherwise, the functionality of a product is more important than its fragrance (or flavor). While a truly great product benefit can overcome a less than delightful fragrance, we must all admit that the reverse is rarely, if ever, true. Thus, let me emphasize that the concern is for functional products, not for fragrance products which are purchased solely for their fragrance attributes.

Fragrance (or flavor) takes on a more important role in consumer products when neither marketing nor product excel significantly and the consumer audience is being addressed by any number of competitors. Another shampoo. Another hair conditioner. Here, it behooves us to examine another part of the proposition of the potential role of fragrance.



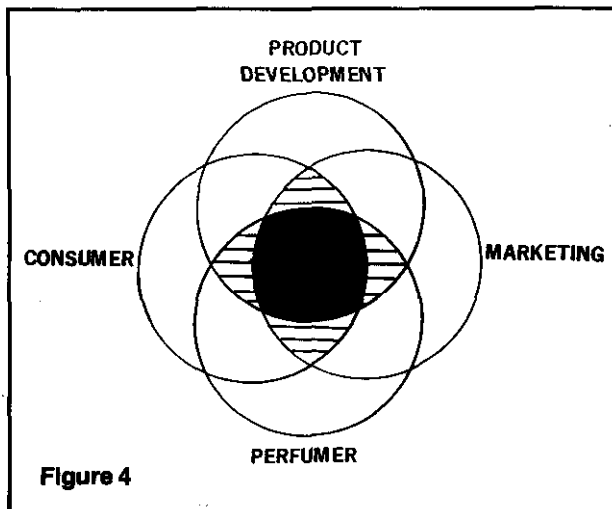
The situation discussed in the previous three figures is somewhat more complex when the situation of fragrance introduction is addressed. Here, it is useful to introduce another dimension, and thus to add an additional circle. This is presented in figure 4. Now four elements are to be considered: (1) as usual, and still most important, the consumer; (2) the product's functionality and other attributes as provided by the product developer; (3) the marketing mix of the product; (4) the contribution of the creative perfumer/innovator.

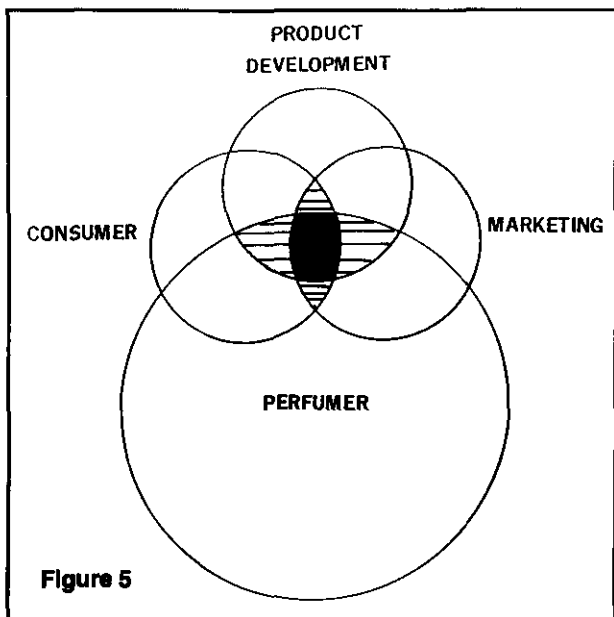
The objective of all of us is to please the consumer, to satisfy consumer needs, to maximize the penetration of the various aspects of product and marketing into that consumer circle. It has generally been agreed that the consumer has fairly well defined needs: basic and emotional. Let me quote from the paper mentioned earlier:



"Consumer needs are complex. Food and shelter are indispensable physical needs. The consumer needs medical care. He also needs pots and pans with which to cook food, beds on which to sleep, chairs on which to sit. Cosmetics and toiletries represent a strong emotional need for the consumer. Some so-called consumer advocates have told us that there is absolutely no need for cosmetics and toiletries. A bar of soap can do the job of a shampoo, sodium bicarbonate or salt can substitute for toothpaste, and what's wrong with the natural human look and smell, anyway? This obviously is totally fallacious. This intense consumer need must be understood if successful new cosmetic and toiletry products are to be developed.

"Holt observed that user needs can be divided into rational and non-rational needs. The former can be expressed quantitatively. He considers the non-rational ones, e.g., style and color, to be emotional in nature and *not subject to direct numerical measurement*. He points to the importance of non-rational needs in determining product acceptability. Tinnesand writes that a firm does not sell physical products with functional properties; it sells satisfaction, a subjective phenomenon possibly achieved at the emotional level. A point to be emphasized here is that emotional or non-rational needs are difficult, if not impossible to quantitate, a point which might make one question the utility in cosmetics and toiletries development of some currently popular market research techniques."





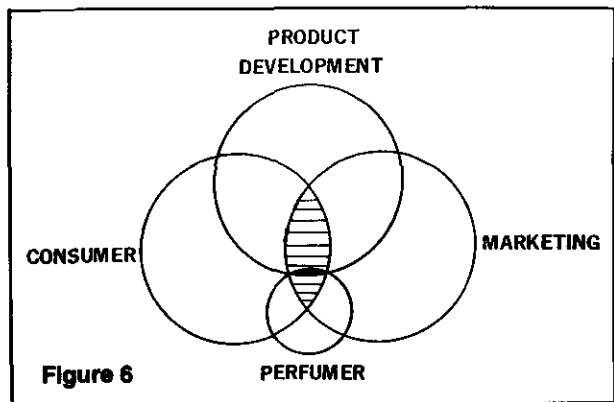
Fragrance is quite obviously an emotional or non-rational need. Therefore, for the developer of functional products with improved or innovative functionalities, fragrance is not the most important concern in the development process. These may be hard words for the perfumer to swallow, but they are undeniably true. It was relatively easy to flavor the first clear gel toothpaste, to fragrance the first liquid detergent. A person who has not had a bath for three days will not be too particular about the fragrance of the soap that is found in the tub. Were a selection of fragranced soaps present, obviously the one with the best liked fragrance would be chosen. But even a nonfragranced bar would be considered a luxury at that point!

So the perfumer has to fulfill an *emotional* consumer need. That is not an easy task, but to build on the foundation laid by the product developer places on the perfumer an extraordinarily difficult burden. The perfumers have to be the big circle in figure 5, and the smaller the innovative attributes of the (product-marketing) mix, the more important is the perfumers' role in penetrating the consumer "circle." They can *not* be

the small "circle" in figure 6.

The name of the game, then, becomes perfume innovation. Some will voice the opinion that fragrance can never make a product "go," or sell unless the product itself is all about fragrance. I would disagree. The creative perfumer can be the key to the forward movement of not only me-too products, but also (albeit to a lesser, more modest extent) of new innovative products from the laboratory.

The creative perfumer must face, along with developer of the "new" product or "improved" product, an important issue. Should the fragrance be truly innovative? Should its fragrance contribution challenge the opportunity of making the product a real "winner"? Or should it provide a "safe" fragrance, one that will not antagonize anyone—the product developer, the consumer, or the marketing people? Or should it represent an attempt to follow some course in between? Should the perfumer attempt to be a leader or a follower? The creative, self-assured, innovative perfumers will not find the choice difficult; they will accept the challenge and go for the works, with their associates' support. Frequently, a middle-of-the-road course will be sought. Only



infrequently, I hope, will perfumers be so conservative as to follow the course of certain low-level acceptance and least resistance.

The developer of a new or improved product, along with marketing colleagues, owes the perfumer good, sound assistance. As was shown in figure 4, it is the concentrated effort of perfumer, technical product developer and marketer that is going to maximize penetration into the consumer's emotional needs and wants. How can that effort be concentrated? How can it be directed? How can all components be maximized?

I do not have the answer. I do have thoughts that I will share with you about the beginnings of a system that has been in the development stage for several years. Now it is undergoing assessment in competition with other methodologies, at least to the limited extent that objective testing of such a complex system is possible.

As the diagrams presented previously suggest, there is no key actor, unless it is the consumer. The product developer, the marketer and the perfumer must together each play a role with no attempt to upstage one another.

The most immediate concern when a new fragrance is required is not substantially different from that which the chemist has when in need of a chemical raw material—who has the best product, who has given good service in the past, who can deliver at the right price, who can be relied on to provide the know-how to react in a constantly changing marketplace?

The answers are not easy in coming, and it would be less than honest to propose that I have a perfect answer. Views differ. Simple purchasing philosophies and procedures are inadequate to supply non-rational needs. The situation is akin to a patient with a particular disease seeking the best doctor, one with the right reputation, a good track record and a favorable disposition. Some people will accept a group practitioner; others will insist on one with a private practice. There is something to be said for both, and individual preference will prevail.

The major process of perfume selection on which I would like to concentrate is the perfume briefing process and subsequent activities, not how the perfume houses are selected to participate in the exercise.

The perfumers involved in fragancing a functional consumer product must be given the maximum opportunity and support to play the important role depicted in figure 4. Whether or not they will be able to perform the larger role depicted in figure 5 is up to them.

First, the perfumer must personally—and I emphasize the word “personally”—empathize

with the consumer on a non-rational level. The development chemist who has formulated a product can be of great help to the perfumer by providing a basic product which provides the perfumer a wide latitude in fragrance chemical selection. The marketing group can provide guidance drawn from statistically designed studies and analyses of the consumer segment they would like to satisfy. But there is no substitute for the perfumer who has empathy with the emotional public. Again from my paper in *Cosmetics & Toiletries*:

“The conception and development of products (and I would now add here, fragrances) is art as much as science. The new innovative product may thus reflect the personality and aspirations of the innovator just as much as a painting reflects the painter, the novel reflects the author, the music reflects the composer, and the style reflects the designer. It is important to recognize that the tools used in the conception and development of innovative cosmetic and toiletry products are the same no matter who uses them, but that the ability to artfully manipulate those tools at the *emotional* level is the major factor in determining creative success or failure. The situation is not unlike that of the artist: artists all have available the same paints, brushes and other articles of their trade, but some create masterpieces with them and others no more than routine efforts.”

It is imperative that the product formulator and the product perfumer interact maximally at the technical level, with due recognition of their respective areas of expertise. Conflict between the two will lead to disaster.

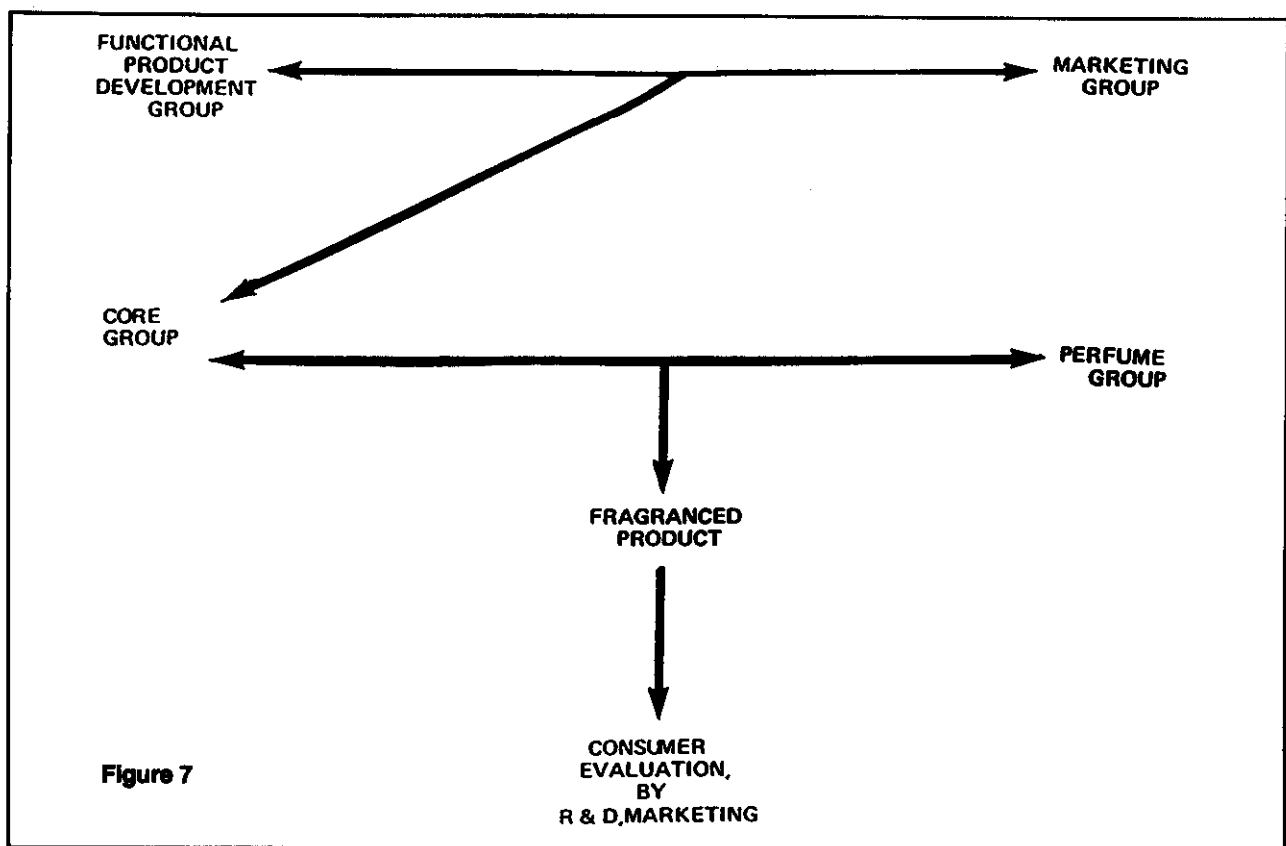
It is also imperative that the marketing arm of the company be directly involved with the fragrance development and selection exercise, again with due recognition of the expertise of the marketer and perfumer.

The marketer must impart to the perfumer the product concept and expectations, information about the advertising theme, statistical knowledge of the market, and other useful information. This should be given in depth; a few typewritten pages composed and given in haste will be of only limited use to the perfumer, if of any use at all.

Strong interaction between marketing personnel and the perfumer is to be encouraged. Again, both parties should recognize their own areas of expertise, and each respect those of the other.

But the perfumer, however, must be engulfed or *live* in the project itself. I am encouraging, then, a pattern of fragrance development shown in figure 7.

The marketing and development groups involved in a particular development project create



a "core" group. This group, in addition to providing the coordination required to bring any new or improved product to market, carefully constructs a program to involve the perfumer. It develops an exciting fragrance brief that exposes the perfumer to all relevant aspects of the product. The brief is well thought out and composed in great-depth—even with audio and visual props.

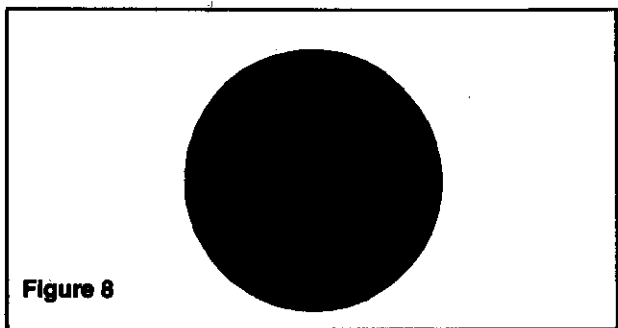
The "core group" then meets with the perfumer. It explains the concept of the product, the type of advertising contemplated, the characteristics of the target consumers, the package. It shows pictures. It discusses demographics. It provides technical/chemical input. It explains the procedure whereby the final fragrance will be selected. It brings the perfumer right into the project fold.

Figure 7 brings to the fore a very important aspect of the scheme of mutual interactions among the groups involved. The eventual fragrance selection will be dictated by consumer reaction, or, in terms used in this paper, by the ability of the marketing, product formulating, and fragrancing elements united to penetrate the consumer arena or circle. The chances of the outcome of consumer acceptability being favorable can only be enhanced when, throughout the whole development process, all participants in the process are focused on the end result.

The need for the perfumers to know the

clients, that is, the nature of the target consumer, can not be overemphasized. Like the good new product developer, the perfumer must understand the target consumers, understand their likes and dislikes, live the product experience along with them, and, most important, empathize with their needs and expectations.

In conclusion, the ideal product development operation, including perfuming of the product, is represented by figure 8, where consumer, product function and fragrance, and marketing are one. That product will withstand all newcomers.



Acknowledgement

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