



# Creativity and Research A New Compatibility

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**W**e have developed a simple, reliable and economical research method for testing a wide range of fragrances internationally. This system provides information on consumer preference but more importantly it provides diagnostic feedback to a perfumer on how fragrance submissions can be consistently improved in line with consumer needs.

We have developed a set of forty reference fragrances and we give perfumers briefs or re-briefs in terms of these reference fragrances.

Figure 2 is what we call a perceptual map of our reference fragrances. The most important point is to look at the relative locations of the fragrances. Over in the east of the map is a group of fragrances which are perceptually similar to each other (A) and the map indicates they are very different from fragrances in the extreme west (B), likewise north and south and so forth. What we have found from previous studies is that these perceptual similarities are constant across cul-

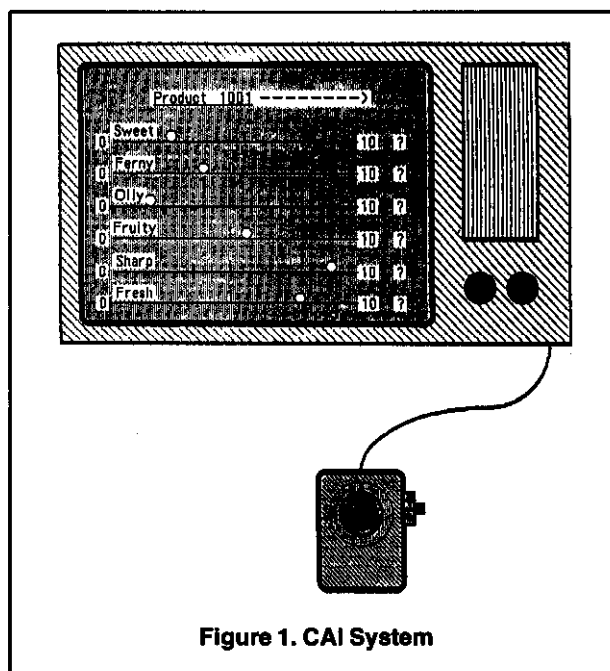


Figure 1. CAI System

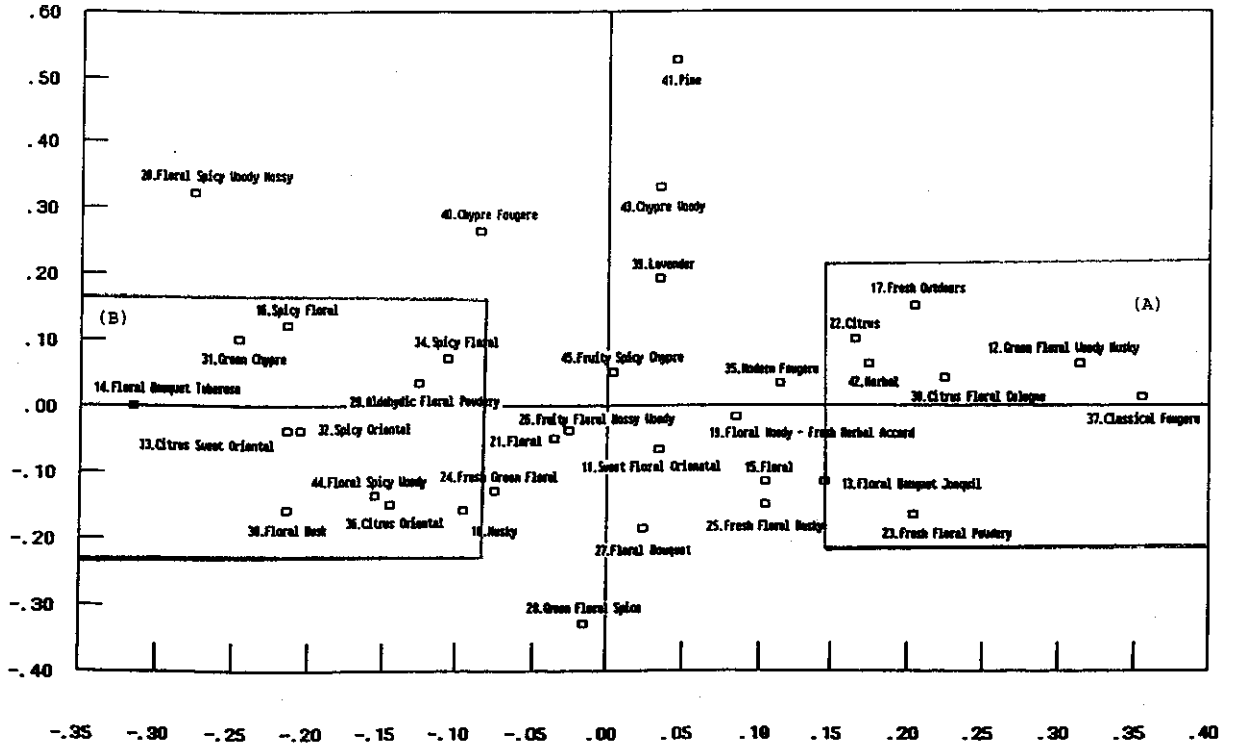


Figure 2. Perceptual Map of 35 Reference Fragrances

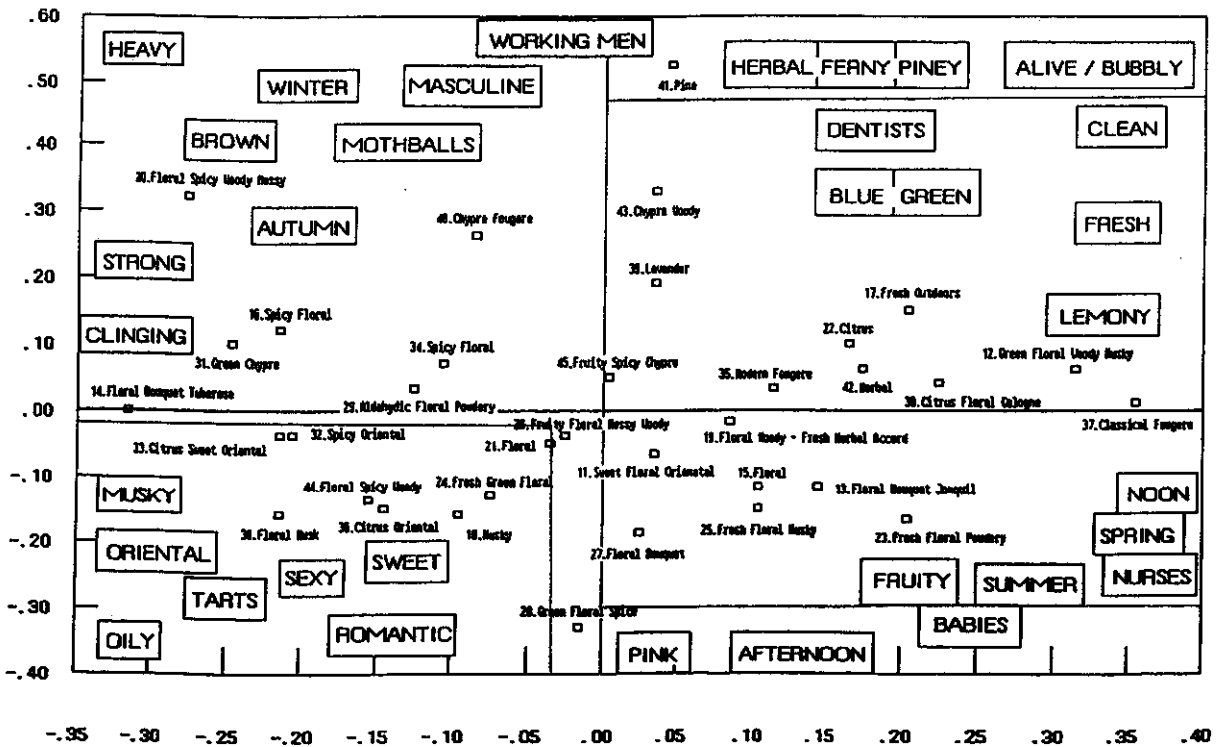


Figure 3. Perceptual Map of 35 Fragrances—West Germany



tural boundaries. As an example if you were to assemble three fragrances—two citrus like a lime and a lemon, and one very different one, like a musk or an oil, then anywhere in the world you go people would recognise the musky one as being fundamentally different from the other two.

Our research is based on interviewing consumers in very large numbers in a number of different countries and different continents. We have developed over the years a system of interviewing people whereby they are responding directly to computer questions in what we call a CAI (Computer Aided Interview). Respondents are given fragrances to smell in small white opaque bottles which are anonymous.

The computer aided interview allows very sensitive data to be collected. Additionally, we can collect much more data from each individual this way. Thousands of women are being interviewed worldwide to build our reference database. Each consumer is asked to rate a fragrance in relation to a specific product field on sixty-two attributes ranging from personality through time of day, moods, colours to some more conventional fragrance descriptors. (See figure 1). These attributes are the result of extensive consumer research.

Our analysis uses some techniques called modelling and simulation and particularly micro-modelling. This means that data from each consumer interviewed, and we have interviewed thousands in many countries, is stored in our central computer in a form which we shall call disaggregated. The data for each individual respondent is stored individually. There are no averages because in this sort of research the average often hides the individual preference and the data is difficult to interpret.

An example from some work we have been doing in West Germany shows the words used to describe our reference fragrances. In different cultures these words may be used differently to describe fragrances. You can see in Figure 3 groups of words which you will recognise as going together fairly well. So this is the language that is specifically West German.

I would expect if we go to other countries or continents that while there will be similarities between the words, their precise position will change. The pine fragrance, for instance, is an interesting one. It's described very differently in each country. In Scandinavia it is fresh and green and youthful. In Spain it is old and brown and oily. This derives from the difference between Spanish and Scandinavian pine trees. So we have

got to the point where the language can vary. What is more important is that the preference can vary as well.

Looking at maps like these is a fairly imprecise thing. These maps are averages and general, but what we have the ability to do for the perfumer is to make use of the reference set. We can show this map but really not as our last word on the subject, but as our first advice about a general direction. We can then be very precise and relate an area on the map to a specific fragrance which the perfumer can smell and have as part of a reference set.

What we are finding is that perfumers who normally suffer from low grade feedback are able to extract from this set of fragrances some fundamental properties that are much more meaningful to them than the normal brief written in consumer terms.

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