

Fragrance and Social Behavior

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My research on fragrance and social behavior is concerned with how people use fragrances to create social images and to play social roles. As a social psychologist, I am well aware that people employ a wide variety of strategies and tactics, some subtle and others not-so-subtle, to control the images they convey to others. With the support of the Fragrance Research Fund, we are looking at the role that people's choices of fragrances (that is, their perfumes, their colognes, their after-shaves) play in the fashioning of images.

We want to know what people's motivations are for using fragrance products. Do people choose scents on the basis of the images they can project by using these products, images that they may learn about from advertising campaigns for particular products? Or, do they choose their scents on the basis of their personal preferences, choosing the fragrance that pleases them independently of the image that it may convey?

Survey on the Role of Fragrance

To answer these questions, we have conducted a major survey of attitudes, behaviors, and motivations relevant to the role of fragrance in the lives of several hundred college students (who are at a critical development period in which so many of their habits as consumers are being formed).

We found that, as fragrance users, our respondents could be typed meaningfully into two categories. In one category are people who use fragrance for fashioning and controlling their social images. They strategically choose different fragrances to help them display different images for different social occasions. These people use a wide range of fragrances, each chosen because of its particular appropriateness to one of the specific roles of their lives (e.g., one fragrance for work situations, another for romantic situations, still another for family situations, etc.).

Personality measures reveal that these people are what are known as *high self-monitors*. In so many do-

main of their lives, these people are highly invested in monitoring or controlling the social images they project; much like the chameleon which takes on the physical colors of its surroundings, high self-monitors take on the social colors of their surroundings. For more information on self-monitoring and the means of measuring it, see my recent book *Public Appearances/Private Realities* (1987).

In the other category are people who use fragrances, not to create images and play roles, but to express their own personalities. These consumers choose their scents on the basis of their own personal reactions to the fragrances, rather than because of considerations of image. In addition, they search for that one fragrance that captures the essence of their identity and employ it across a wide range of situations, roles, and relationships.

Personality inventories indicate that these people are *low self-monitors*, the type who, in so many domains of their lives (as my 1987 book on self-monitoring has explicated), seek to be "true blues", steadfastly loyal to their own personal sense of self and scrupulously looking for ways to display their own true personalities in their dealings with other people.

Marketing Strategy for Fragrances

Knowing about these differences in the motivations underlying fragrance use, the question becomes: How should one market fragrance products to each type of user? In previous research, we have found that high self-monitors are particularly sensitive to image considerations in advertising; by contrast, low self-monitors are particularly sensitive to information about the product itself (e.g., DeBono & Snyder, 1989; Snyder & DeBono, 1985). And, so it is with fragrances. Consider the results of one study in which we created magazine-type ads for perfumes and colognes (Snyder, In press). In our ads, both the picture and the written message conveyed information either about the image associated with the fragrance and its users or about the fragrance product itself.

Thus, an ad for a women's perfume featuring a picture of a couple in a romantic setting and the slogan "Timeless Romance" would be constituted of an image-oriented pictorial message and an image-oriented written message, whereas an ad featuring a picture of the fragrance product itself and the slogan "A Soft Floral Scent With a Hint of Musk" is constituted of a product-oriented picture and a product-oriented written message.

Similarly, an ad for a men's cologne featuring a young man who is the picture of success and upward mobility and the slogan "Success Has Always Been Your Style" would be constituted of an image-oriented pictorial message and an image-oriented written message, whereas an ad featuring a picture of the fragrance product itself and the slogan "A Fresh Spicy Blend of Citrus and Jasmine" is constituted of a product-oriented picture and a product-oriented written message.

When we had college students evaluate these ads, we found that high self-monitors assigned more favorable evaluations to the ads that convey information about the images to be gained by using the fragrance whereas low self-monitors assigned their most

favorable evaluations to those ads that convey information about the fragrance product itself.

Consider the marketing implications of these findings. They suggest that it may require separate advertising campaigns to reach these two types of consumers, that is, one image-oriented campaign to appeal to high self-monitoring consumers and a separate product-oriented campaign to appeal to low self-monitoring consumers. Whether these two possibly competing goals can be achieved simultaneously in one marketing campaign is an empirical question, one that we are currently exploring in our research. Moreover, these findings may say something about brand loyalty.

In ongoing investigations, we are trying to understand why some consumers (low self-monitors, our research would suggest) become habitual and loyal users of one brand (presumably one they believe captures the essence of their personality and identity) and why other consumers (high self-monitors) are less loyal to any particular brand, but instead use a variety of brands (each, presumably, relevant to some role domain of their lives).

Conclusion

In our research we have been able to identify two types of people who differ in their attitudes, motivations, and behavior when it comes to using fragrances, and these types are deeply rooted in basic personality processes and functioning. One type, namely high self-monitors, choose their fragrances on the basis of image considerations (seeking a variety of fragrances for purposes of creating or enhancing diverse images, and hence being particularly sensitive to image considerations in advertising). A sharply different type, namely low self-monitors, choose their fragrances on the basis of their reactions to its actual scent properties (seeking a single fragrance whose scent they personally enjoy, and hence being particularly sensitive to such product quality information in advertising).

References

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The Fragrance Research Fund

This article is an informal description of one of the research projects supported by The Fragrance Research Fund. This fund has as its main objective the financing of research related to the impact of fragrances in humans.

It studies the sense of smell and human reaction to olfactory stimulation. The research is of an interdisciplinary nature, including anatomical and ultrastructural observations, physiological and biochemical studies as well as psychological and behavioral reactions to fragrance.

This research is expected to clarify how fragrances operate and how they impact, via the central nervous system and hormonal mediators, on moods, mental attitudes and general physical health.

The President of The Fragrance Research Fund is Dr. Jack Mausner, Senior Vice President Research and Development, Chanel, Inc. For further information on the research and educational activities of the Fragrance Research Fund and of the Fragrance Foundation contact: Annette Green, The Fragrance Foundation, 142 East 30th Street, New York, NY 10016, USA.