

IDEAS

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THE TECH BEAT | BY JAMES HARDING

DOLLARS AND SCENTS

I recently had the dubious pleasure of spending several weeks in an extended stay hotel, and surprisingly, it wasn't the dog doo at the front door, the 5 a.m. car horns or even the unexpected parking lot nudity that most offended my senses. In fact, it was the daily indignation of walking down a hallway filled with unfamiliar (and often offensive) smells that made me yearn for my new home. So powerful was the impact of these undesirable odors that — before I even realized what I was doing — I'd adjusted my daily routine to avoid the worst of them. Luckily, I was able to close on my new house and move out before the extended stay's malodorous hallways drove me to the competition, but the experience made me think about how smells (pleasant or otherwise) might be affecting my retail clients.

SCIENCE OF SMELL

According to a TED-Ed lesson by Rose Eveleth, an average person can distinguish between over 10,000 distinct smells. Unlike our other senses (which are centrally processed), sensory input from smells travel directly to different parts of the human brain — including those most closely associated with memory.

These powerful impulses can trigger emotional responses, engage our fight-or-flight reflex or



Scent marketing can give you an edge this holiday season

even cause physiological reactions (making one's mouth water, for example). This is why smell can be critical to successful retail.

Probably the best example is Cinnabon. Did you know that Cinnabon actually positions their shops in places where smells tend to linger? Cinnabon purposely formulates their delicious topping to give off a strong cinnamon-sweet smell that will entice shoppers who might not otherwise be in the mood for dessert. They know that their specially formulated scent evokes a sense of comfort,

familiarity and family from passersby, and few can resist the resulting emotional impulse to experience what reminds them of Grandma's cinnamon rolls. It's an extremely successful piece of their marketing strategy.

Even companies like Nike (which has nothing at all to do with food) saw an 80 percent increase in intent to purchase using scent marketing.

Mike Gatti, formerly the executive director of marketing at the National Retail Federation, told *The Independent* in 2011 that scent marketing is a widespread phenomenon in modern retailing, saying, "A lot of companies use it, and its purpose is to keep customers in your store, to create this welcoming environment — and it works; it does keep people in your store longer. It helps people feel better in their shopping, and in a lot of cases, causes them to spend more money."

SELL WITH SCENT

The question isn't whether or not scent marketing works. The question is: Why aren't independent music retailers already taking advantage of it, especially during the holidays?

Imagine: You're a piano retailer and you want to stand out from all the other piano retailers your client is likely to visit. How different would your

in-store experience be if you diffused a fresh pine essential oil in your piano showroom, giving your store a fresh, comfortable, Christmas tree scent? How much happier would your clients be if your store smelled more like the great outdoors and less like the inside of a glue factory? Why not diffuse some cinnamon and vanilla essential oils? Make your store smell like freshly baked cookies and your clients will definitely hang around! How much more print music would you sell if your department smelled like peppermint instead of old paper? The examples are endless.

Think about the money you could make if your clients enjoyed the smell of your store (including that afterthought of a bathroom you have in back).

This holiday season, consider using scent marketing as your secret weapon against the big-box stores that simply have too much space to use such a tool. Do it right and your store will be the warm, welcoming haven families need during this busy shopping time — and they will reward you by purchasing more of what you sell. It's just good dollars and scents! **MI**

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