

The Power of Scent: Effects of Scent on Temperature Perception Due to Synesthesia: An Abstract

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Abstract Most research on the impact of scent has focused on its effects on memory and brand recall (e.g., Krishna, 2012; Morrin & Ratneshwar, 2003). Scent has been shown to have an effect on behaviors through the use of mood mechanisms (Baron & Bronfen, 1994). Given the mixed findings on scents' effects (Ellen & Bone, 1998), there is a need for further exploration in the scent research area.

Synesthesia is a phenomenon in which stimulation of one human sense causes abnormal experiences in another sense (Hubbard & Ramachandran, 2005). In regard to synesthesia, several studies have found that certain scents can carry haptic-based affiliations where some scents are perceived as warm (e.g., vanilla) and others are perceived as cool (e.g., peppermint).

Kotler (1973, pg. 50) defined atmospherics as “the effort to design buying environments to produce specific emotional effects in the buyer that enhance his purchase probability.” We are concerned with atmosphere in reference to the quality of the area in which the product is presented. Since this type of atmosphere is processed through our senses, it is possible to describe the atmosphere utilizing sensory language. Scent may be an influential element in producing useful perceptions of a retail atmosphere.

This research proposes that associations of a scent can be used to manipulate an individual's perception of body temperature in order to influence purchase behavior. In this study, I test whether people will subsume warm and cool scents' associations with self-perception of temperature when making certain product-purchasing decisions.

The study utilizes a between-subject design with a sample of 60 students. An experiment will be conducted in which individuals will be asked to watch a series of advertisements and then complete a survey. Individuals will watch advertisements with hedonic products and utilitarian products and will complete a survey assessing the product preferences for those two categories of products. Ten minutes prior to the participant's entry into the room, an electric diffuser will release either a warm or cool scent. Temperature will be measured concurrently with scent diffuser release as well as when individuals enter the room. This research attempts to

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combine scent theory with atmospheric theory through the phenomenon known as synesthesia to study its influence on preference formation.

References Available Upon Request