

by Rus Kinzinger

To Get The Sale, You've Got to Engage Their Senses

The next time you are visiting your favorite apparel store, stop, and then smell! That's right, stop what you're doing and take a long whiff. Notice anything of interest? Chances are you'll discover a distinct smell.

Whether or not you have noticed it before, that smell is part of the store's distinct brand, and it is part of the overall cocktail that causes you to return time and again. I might even go so far as to speculate that if you were led blindfolded to the store, you would be able to identify where you were based solely on what the sense of smell told you. Smell is our most evocative, enduring, and intense sense. But it is not our only sense.

Marketing to Every Sense

Sensory marketing is a way of describing the form and function of marketing which has as its goal to create awareness and to influence consumer behavior via the various sensory channels to the decision center, i.e. the brain. Whereas I mentioned only the sense of smell, there is also sight, taste, touch, and hearing. Sensory marketing seeks to influence consumer buying behavior through each. One of my favorite retail stores, for example, encourages the shopper to "Please touch." When I do, I buy. The more senses a retailer can engage, the more likely a consumer is to make a purchase.

Application to Retail Thrift

Retail thrift shops are not exempt from the benefits of sensory marketing. Done properly and as part of your store's distinct brand, the customer can be fully, sensually engaged upon

entry. Remember, however, that marketing effectively via the senses is *purposive*. It does not just happen. What emotion or memory do you want to evoke with smell? Will any aspect of your offering be complemented by a particular scent? What do you want your shoppers to experience, or remember? What about sound? Will what the customer hears in your store benefit his or her purchasing choices? A beautiful melody played too loudly will distract your shoppers. Too soft and you might as well not have music playing. Have you linked the music to your shopper demographic? Volume-correct music will have little effect unless it touches your customer. What about sight? Taste? One way or another, your customers can and will identify you through their senses.

Engage their senses and you will increase your sales. In the process, have fun!

Marketing has as its goal to create awareness and to influence consumer behavior via the various sensory channels to the decision center.