

THE ROLE OF FRAGRANCE IN THE BRAND PERSONALITY OF CONSUMER PRODUCTS

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This paper explores the role of fragrance in defining a brand’s personality at the point of purchase relative to its packaging. Louis Cheskin’s concept of Sensation Transference provides the basis for this exploratory research. Results contained herein are based on a consumer study of shampoo products designed to provide insight into recognizing fragrance’s contribution to the marketing mix of consumer product goods, measuring the impact of fragrance on brand identity, and understanding how fragrance, along with packaging, influences consumers’ purchase decisions and overall appeal.

INTRODUCTION

Louis Cheskin’s groundbreaking package research supports the paradigm that the package is the product. Packaging communicates a product’s personality and its power in shaping a brand has proven priceless time and again. “The basic concept – that a product’s package has an impact on the consumer’s perceptions of the product’s performance – is as true today as it was 50 years ago when it was first identified” (Deasy, 2000).

A product’s package embodies most of the key elements in the marketing mix – brand name, brand image, brand position, concept (“reason to believe” and

product performance claims), and, of course, design. However, it is commonly known that fragrance is a key element in the mix – fragrance too influences the consumers’ assessment of product performance. Consequently, consumer goods companies spend almost \$12 billion per year on fragrance for the manufacturing of their products (<http://www.leffingwell.com/>, 2005). This amount alone is an indicator of the importance of fragrance in consumer perception, and subsequently, a product’s success. Nonetheless, Cheskin’s theory minimizes the role of other players in the sensory bundle – notably fragrance.

Utilizing a variation of Cheskin’s methodology, this experiment seeks to determine what role fragrance plays in defining the brand personality of consumer goods, particularly shampoo, and asks the questions: Is the package alone the key driver in consumer acceptability? Will fragrance prove the stronger driver? Or, does the whole sensory bundle at the point of purchase have a compound effect on the consumer, epitomizing the classic theory; the whole is greater than the sum of its parts?

Cheskin’s Research

In a series of classic experiments in the 1930s, marketing guru Louis Cheskin demonstrated that package design could alter the way consumers perceived the product they sampled. He placed identical crackers in two different packages – one with circles, the other with triangles. Approximately 80% of 1,000 respondents preferred the crackers in the box with circles to those in the box with the triangles. Respondents attributed their preferences to the “higherquality” product, though the contents of the boxes were identical (Hines, 1995).

Cheskin pursued the issue even further by presenting the two boxes and asking the respondents to predict which cracker that they would like better without tasting the product. As found in the first study, crackers in the “circle box” were preferred over crackers in the “triangle box.” Moreover, after tasting the crackers, respondents’ actual preference differed by less than 2% from their predicted preference (Hines, 1995). Cheskin coined this phenomenon “sensation transference”, the transfer of a consumer’s feelings about the package to the product (Sacharow, 1982). The theory has little interest in what people think about the package, but rather emphasizes the importance of what the package makes people feel about the product.

The contemporary interpretation of the theory of sensation transference

suggests that people assign expectations to products and personalities to brands based on the visual expression set forth by the package (Recker and Kathman, 2001). Motivational researchers suggest that the consumer views the package as a representation of the product, i.e., image is transferred to the product and subsequently to the brand personality (Sacharow, 1982). Reasonably, smart packaging accentuates brand personality, stimulating consumers' emotions; this initiates a relationship between the consumer and the package (Makely, 2004).

The Role of Fragrance

Nonetheless, the role of fragrance in successful consumer products cannot be underestimated. Fragrances are instantly – and mostly unconsciously – connected to emotions, mood, and memory which subconsciously affect consumer purchase behavior. Since fragrance can be a powerful (and perhaps unconscious) motivator for sales, manufacturers of consumer product goods intentionally connect the product's fragrance with the brand's market position (Wilkie, 1995).

Not unlike Cheskin's paradigm wherein the package is the product, in shampoos, the fragrance portrays the brand personality (Benton and Jourdan-Gassin, 1996). In the 21st century, the scent of a personal care product must have a role other than just being well liked; it needs to communicate to the consumer the brands premise and promise, e.g., highly efficacious cleaning *and* nourishing/caring to your skin.

The use of fragrance to convey a brand's position is no better exemplified than in the shampoo market. "Fragrance is one of the top reasons people buy shampoo ... if you watch a consumer trying to decide if she wants to buy something new, the first thing she does is sample the fragrance" (MMR, 2003). At point of purchase, packaging can elicit the interest of consumers. Once done, fragrance must fulfill, if not exceed, the expectations induced by the package. "No element of the marketing mix can be left to trial and error ... all components must be cohesive and only then will the sum of the parts be equal to something greater than the whole" (Busch, 2003).

Research Objectives

It is hypothesized that Cheskin's theory of sensation transference can be applied to a fragrance in a consumer product, i.e., the imagery elicited by a fragrance can be transferred to the product.

Objectives were established to:

1. 1. Define the "personality" evoked by fragrance, package, and the

combination thereof;

2. 2. Measure the impact of fragrance on consumer acceptability relative to its package;
3. 3. Determine whether fragrance or package is a stronger driver in consumer acceptance and purchasing decisions or if their effects on brand personality are complementary.

THE EXPERIMENT

General Methodology

A two-product CLT was conducted by Q Research Solutions, Inc. in Old Bridge, New Jersey, i.e., Dove Beautifully Clean and Finesse Enhancing Shampoo. Product choices were based on packaging differences; the experiment includes a “white” package (conveys clean and pure) and a “color” (the universal method of visual attraction).

Two hundred women aged 18-55 years participated in this study. Qualified respondents wash their hair at least five times a week and use mass market brand shampoo for normal hair. Moreover, these women typically use clean/soap type shampoo fragrances versus sweet and fruity scents.

The study was conducted over two days, with two phases of testing per day:

- ⊗ Day 1:
 - Blind evaluation of fragrances
 - Evaluation of package alone (no fragrance)
- ⊗ Day 2:
 - Evaluation of fragrances in their own package
 - Evaluation of fragrances in the alternate package

All fragrances were evaluated full strength to most closely emulate the fragrance impression at the point of purchase.

Day 1

There were two phases of testing on Day 1 – blind fragrance evaluation followed by a package evaluation. Both phases used a sequential monadic design, counterbalanced for order of presentation. For the fragrance evaluation, the two products were packaged in 2 oz. white opaque HDPE containers (one-half full) with flip top caps, and identified by three digit codes. Individual evaluations were performed followed by a forced choice preference. For the package evaluation, respondents evaluated the Dove Beautifully Clean product

and Finesse Enhancing Shampoo product, individually followed by a forced choice preference.

Day 2

There were two phases of testing on Day 2 – fragrance evaluation in the appropriate product packages, followed by fragrance evaluation in the inappropriate product packages (i.e., products were switched with package). Both phases used a sequential monadic design, counterbalanced for order of presentation.

Figure 1a Figure 1b DOVE BEAUTIFULLY CLEAN FINESSE ENHANCING SHAMPOO



DATA ANALYSES

For acceptability, significance level was set at .05.

Perceptual Maps

A Correspondence Map can be used to present a statistical picture of what fragrances communicate to consumers. A Perceptual Map via Multiple Correspondence Analysis is generated to show hidden relationships (i.e., associations) among fragrances and attributes. The various relationships among attributes and a fragrance can be used to derive the “personality” of the fragrance (Ingersoll and Winter, 2003).

Distance on the map is inversely related to the degree of association. Consequently, the closer an attribute is to a fragrance, a fragrance to another fragrance, or an attribute to another, the more they are associated (e.g.,

correlated) or, to one another. Secondly, the center of the map represents “commonality” while distance from the center is directly related to “uniqueness”. Hence, each fragrance’s “personality” can readily be conveyed after visual inspection (Ingersoll and Winter, 2003).

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

- ⊗ *Fragrance*. Overall, the Dove fragrance was the most well liked and prevailed at all stages – presented unidentified, in its own bottle, and in the Finesse bottle. In all cases, Dove was profiled by respondents as being *clean, fresh, natural, and mild/gentle*. The Finesse personality is inconsistent and varies at different stages of evaluation.
- ⊗ *Package*. Both packages, unaided by fragrance, were rated comparably on Overall Acceptability. Interestingly, however, the two packages took on very different personalities. The Dove package was perceived as being *clean, fresh, natural, and mild/gentle*. The Finesse bottle personified *luxurious, contemporary, high quality, and pampering*.
- ⊗ *Fragrance-Package (Dis)Harmony*. While the personality of the Finesse fragrance differed from that of its package, Dove’s scent mirrored the traits of its package. In fact, so strong was this “personality”, that when paired with the Finesse package, the Dove fragrance was able to alter the personality of the Finesse brand to reflect its own – *clean, fresh, natural, and mild/gentle*.

Both univariate and multiple correspondence analyses exemplify the impact of Dove’s harmony between fragrance and package – a highly desirable product and a clear, congruent brand personality.

DETAILED FINDINGS

Fragrance

The Dove fragrance has a significantly ($p \leq .05$) higher appeal than Finesse (see table 1). Dove outperformed Finesse with regard to acceptability measures when evaluated blind and regardless of packaging. At all three stages of evaluation involving fragrance, Dove was rated significantly higher than Finesse for both Purchase Intent ($p \leq .05$) and Overall Liking ($p \leq .05$). Moreover, the preference scores supported the monadic data with significant ($p \leq .05$)

partiality for the Dove fragrance.

Packaging

Without the contribution of fragrance, the Dove and Finesse packages were equally liked ($p>.05$), e.g., respondents expressed similar purchase interest and preference (see table 1).

Table 1 ACCEPTABILITY MEASURES

N=200	Fragrance Only (Blind)	Package Only	Package with Fragrance	Alternate Package with Fragrance
	Dove Finesse (n=200) (n=200) -A--B-	Dove Finesse (n=200) (n=200) -C--D-	Dove in Dove Finesse in Finesse (n=200) (n=200) -E--F-	Dove in Finesse Finesse in Dove (n=200) (n=200) -G--H-
Purchase Intent - 5 pt. Scale	3.87B 3.30	3.86 3.96	3.77F 3.55	3.74H 3.47
Top 2 Box	77%B 48%	73% 76%	68%F 57%	67%H 56%
Bottom 2 Box	13% 28%A	9% 10%	11% 19%E	15% 21%
Overall Rating - 10 pt. Scale	7.56B 6.22	7.39 7.58	7.50F 6.55	7.22H 6.79
Top 3 Box	61%B 34%	54% 58%	59%F 40%	56%H 44%
Bottom 3 Box	2% 9%A	3% 1%	2% 8%E	1% 4%g
Preference	69%B 31%	46% 54%	61%F 39%	57%H 43%

Note: Uppercase letter beside number denotes significantly higher than referent letter group at the 95% confidence level; lowercase at the 90%.

Fragrance-Package (Dis)Harmony

Dove Beautifully Clean. The Dove fragrance maintains its profile through all stages of testing – *clean, fresh, gentle/mild, and natural*. Interestingly, when the package is evaluated unaided by fragrance and with the Dove fragrance, it garners the same description. Consequently, it can be stated that both the package and the fragrance harmonize in delivering a unified personality.

Finesse Enhancing Shampoo. Regardless of packaging and when evaluated unbranded, the Finesse fragrance conveys *clean, fresh, and gentle/mild* (see table 2). Beyond these attributes, however, the Finesse personality is inconsistent. At the blind stage (BPT) and package alone, respondents rated the Finesse fragrance as being *contemporary*. However, when package and fragrance are evaluated together (IPT), mentions of these attributes drop off significantly ($p<.05$).

The Finesse package conveys a positive personality – *clean, fresh, contemporary, luxurious, high quality, and pampering*. However, the Finesse fragrance fails to deliver these qualities, demonstrating a disconnect between the fragrance and packaging personalities (see table 2).

Table 2 PRODUCT ATTRIBUTES

N=200	Fragrance Only (Blind)	Package Only	Package with Fragrance	Alternate Package with Fragrance
	Dove Finesse (n=200) (n=200) -A--B-	Dove Finesse (n=200) (n=200) -C--D-	Dove in Dove Finesse in Finesse (n=200) (n=200) -E--F-	Dove in Finesse Finesse in Dove (n=200) (n=200) -G--H-
Cheap	8% 26%A	4% 4%	7% 15%E	18% 14%
Clean	63%B 53%	69%D 59%	71%F 59%	65% 62%
Contemporary	29% 48%A	23% 51%C	23% 19%	23% 17%
Fresh	68% 63%	52% 49%	65%F 51%	62%H 52%
Gentle/Mild	51%B 40%	60%D 20%	52% 49%	46% 45%
Harsh	3% 6%	2% 1%	4% 7%	2% 2%
High Quality	27% 24%	20% 35%C	24%F 16%	24% 20%
Luxurious	16% 15%	13% 41%C	16% 13%	15% 11%
Medicinal	2% 8%A	1% 2%	3% 11%E	5% 6%
Natural	29% 30%	48%D 23%	34% 32%	35% 35%
Old-Fashioned	3% 10%A	15%D 7%	1% 10%E	2% 8%G
Pampering	22% 19%	21% 35%C	28%F 17%	26%H 14%

Note: Uppercase letter beside number denotes significantly higher than referent letter group at the 95% confidence level; lowercase at the 90%.

Fragrance Intensity

Overall, the Dove fragrance was perceived more often than Finesse as being *just about right* with regard to intensity. While those who did not rate either fragrance as being just about right tended to rate the products as weak, when evaluated blind and in the Dove package, Finesse was significantly described as being *too weak*. A very few respondents (less than 10%) felt the fragrance of either Dove or Finesse was *too strong*.

Table 3 STRENGTH OF SCENT

	Fragrance Only (Blind)	Package with Fragrance	Alternate Package with Fragrance
	Dove Finesse (n=200) (n=200) -A--B-	Dove in Dove Finesse in Finesse (n=200) (n=200) -E--F-	Dove in Finesse Finesse in Dove (n=200) (n=200) -G--H-
Strength of Scent - JAR			
Too Strong - T2B	80%B 54% 4% 6%	70%f 61% 6% 9%	72%H 52% 6% 8%
Too Weak - B2B	16% 40%A	24% 30%	22% 40%G

Note: Uppercase letter beside number denotes significantly higher than referent letter group at the 95% confidence level; lowercase at the 90%.

DETAILED FINDINGS – PERCEPTUAL MAPPING

Overall, the product profiles, or “personalities”, are in line with the descriptive summary; however, a much richer analysis unfolds when looking at the Multiple Correspondence Analysis output.

Figure 2 PERCEPTUAL MAP



The perceptual map indicates that the Dove fragrance and the Dove package are associated in the consumers’ mind. Even when the Dove fragrance is presented with the Finesse package, the pairing is pulled back towards the Dove “personality”. It is well liked and is perceived as being *clean*, *fresh*, *natural*, and *gentle/mild*. The ability of the Dove fragrance to maintain its identity in a package that on its own attests to the hypothesis that this particular fragrance is instrumental in defining brand personality.

The Finesse fragrance and package, however, are clearly incongruent. The fragrance when evaluated blind is not well liked and perceived as being *cheap*, *medicinal*, and *harsh*. The more favorable of these two parameters was the package – *pampering*, *high quality*, *luxurious*, *contemporary* – and lies somewhat closer to positive purchase intent and overall rating.

Though the Finesse fragrance and package alone are quite a distance from likeability measures, the pairing of package and fragrance, though not stellar performers, are more closely associated with a positive purchase intent and overall rating. However, it is interesting to note that the personality of the fragrance prevails as the pairing moves away from the package’s profile and into the blind fragrance’s quadrant. Nonetheless, Finesse in Finesse also moves closer to some of the more positive Dove attributes, such as *fresh*.

Finesse in the Dove bottle is even more liked, and is likely impacted by Dove's personality embodied in the package. In fact, Finesse in Dove does not lie a great distance from Dove's "territory" (*clean, fresh, natural, and gentle/mild*).

While the Finesse products are perceived as being more "unique" based on their distance from the center of the map, the better-liked Dove product is seen as more "common". Perhaps shampoo "personalities" that emit a sense of familiarity, possibly even a sense of nostalgia, are fundamental in capitalizing on consumer likeability. It is not a stretch to conclude that the Dove brand carries with it a certain equity since the introduction of the Dove Beauty Bar in 1957 (<http://www.dove.com/>, 2005). Even so, Finesse is a viable hair care line, and when its fragrance and package are paired, it does move toward more "common ground" and closer to those positive acceptability measures.

DISCUSSION

Cheskin's experiment has been repeated in multiple variations with countless products and "despite increasing consumer sophistication about marketing tactics, despite defensiveness and cynicism, it still works" (Hines, 1995). Nonetheless, the value of all elements in the marketing mix should not be underestimated, particularly in consumer products where fragrance is not only instrumental to consumer acceptability and perceived efficacy, but in defining a brand's personality.

The Dove product proved the most successful at defining a congruent personality for both package and fragrance. Alone, each was able to maintain its personality; together the effects of this personality bred a higher correlation to positive acceptability measures. In fact, the Dove personality was so well defined among consumers that when coupled with either the Finesse package or fragrance, the pairing was pulled closer to the Dove personality, and accordingly, was more well-liked among consumers.

Conversely, the Finesse package and fragrance separately portrayed different traits to the consumer, and when paired, the personality, though offering more appeal, changed once again. Resulting were lower hedonic scores than Dove, indicating a lower likelihood of selection at the point of purchase.

Both fragrance or package alone are capable of defining a brand's personality, but the impact of a compelling personality delivered through fragrance and package is priceless in building brand equity and augmenting consumer acceptance.

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