

Engage Their Senses

By Rus Kinzinger

The next time you are visiting your favorite apparel store, *smell!* That's right, stop what you're doing and take a long *sniff*. Notice anything of interest? Chances are you'll discover a distinct smell. Whether you have noticed it before or not, that smell is part of the store's distinct brand, and it is part of the brand cocktail that brings you back to the store 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. Sensory marketing is a way of describing the form and function of marketing which has as its goal to create awareness and 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.

Thrift retailers 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 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 about sound? Will what the customer hears in your store benefit his or her purchasing choices? What about sight? Taste? One way or another, you *do* have an identifiable brand. Why not make it one that will increase your sales. Brand evokes emotions, and emotions—when wrapped around your products—build customer loyalty.

So tell me, how's your brand identity?

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