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THE OLFACTORY COMPONENT OF THE STRATEGY FOR ENSURING INTERNATIONAL COMPETITIVENESS

Abstract. *The article examines the problems of factors influencing the processes of perception, memorization of information, and decision-making regarding the purchase of goods, which are actively used in the field of advertising, trade, and business, as they create tangible economic effects. The purpose of the article is to study the influence of olfactory influence tools on consumer behavior, namely: the formation of connections between the emotional component and aromas. In the course of research and generalization of works in this area, it was found that the use of unique aromas in business increases brand recognition, stimulates purchases, and creates a positive perception of the product on the global market. Olfactory tools have become an integral part of strategic marketing, which directly affects the international competitiveness of companies. The use of aromas allows brands to build an emotional connection with customers that goes beyond cultural and language barriers. The important role of aromas in the field of trade in services and the impact on both consumers and the work of enterprise personnel is determined. At the same time, the problematic aspects of the use of aroma tools in the field of trade and international trade in particular are emphasized. The main problems associated with the use of aroma marketing are identified, such as the compliance of aromas with quality and safety requirements, its consistency with other characteristics of your product and brand, excessive complexity of the aroma, which can lead to the opposite effect. The importance of taking into account multisensory congruence is emphasized, taking into account potential problems associated with sensory overload, and the need to take into account the cross-cultural characteristics of the use of aromas in the markets of other countries. Further research should be aimed at researching and developing aroma marketing tools that ensure the positive impact of smells on consumers, and improving the use of aroma marketing tools in the conditions of modern digital business: digital marketing and e-commerce.*

Keywords: international trade, scent marketing, international competitiveness, cross-cultural differences, olfactory tools of influence, consumer behaviour.

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ОЛЬФАКТОРНА СКЛАДОВА СТРАТЕГІЇ ЗАБЕЗПЕЧЕННЯ МІЖНАРОДНОЇ КОНКУРЕНТОСПРОМОЖНОСТІ

Анотація. *В статті досліджуються проблеми факторів впливу на процеси сприйняття, запам'ятовування інформації, приймання рішень щодо купівлі товару, що активно використовується у сфері реклами, торгівлі та бізнесу, оскільки створює відчутні економічні ефекти. Метою статті є дослідження впливу на поведінку споживачів інструментів ольфакторного впливу, а саме: формування зв'язків між емоційною складовою та ароматами. У ході дослідження та узагальнення робіт у даній сфері встановлено, що використання унікальних ароматів у бізнесі підвищує впізнаваність бренду, стимулює покупки та створює позитивне сприйняття продукту на глобальному ринку. Ольфакторні інструменти стали невід'ємною складовою стратегічного маркетингу, що безпосередньо впливає на міжнародну конкурентоспроможність компаній. Використання ароматів дозволяє брендам будувати емоційний зв'язок із клієнтами, що виходить за межі культурних та мовних бар'єрів. Визначено важливу роль ароматів у сфері торгівлі послугами та впливу як на споживачів, так і роботу персоналу підприємств. У той же час наголошується на проблемних аспектах використання аромаінструментів у сфері торгівлі та міжнародної торгівлі зокрема. Визначено основні проблеми, пов'язані з використанням аромамаркетингу, такі як відповідність ароматів вимогам якості та безпеки, його узгодженість з іншими характеристиками вашого товару та бренду, надмірне ускладнення аромату, що може призвести до протилежного ефекту. Підкреслюється важливість врахування мультисенсорної конгруентності, враховуючи потенційні проблеми, пов'язані з сенсорним перевантаженням, та необхідності врахування міжкультурних особливостей використання ароматів на ринках інших країн. Подальші дослідження повинні бути спрямовані на дослідження та* розвиток інструментів аромамаркетингу, які забезпечують позитивний вплив запахів на споживачів, та вдосконалення використання інструментів аромамаркетингу в умовах *сучасного цифрового бізнесу: цифрового маркетингу* та електронної комерції.

Ключові слова: міжнародна торгівля, аромамаркетинг, міжнародна конкурентоспроможність, міжкультурні відмінності, ольфакторні інструменти впливу, поведінка споживача.

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Formulation of the problem. The ability to comprehend how individuals perceive and retain information, and how they make decisions – including those relating to the purchase of goods – has long been an integral part of all areas of activity. The application of this technology is particularly extensive in the domains of advertising, retail and business, as it engenders demonstrable economic advantages.

It has been determined by experts in the field that, in order to attract a consumer's attention to a product and encourage them to make a purchase, it is necessary to evoke an emotional response to the product on offer. The propensity for individuals to act on impulse, as opposed to acting in a considered manner, is often influenced by emotional states. In a market characterised by an oversaturation of goods and services, the influence of the emotional sphere on the retention of information about a product and the propensity to purchase it has given rise to research fields such as neuromarketing and emotional marketing [1, p. 154]. The senses have been shown to play a decisive role in shaping the emotional component, as they have a direct influence on the human subconscious. Research in the field of sensory marketing has revealed such a successful impact that today we speak of gastro-marketing, aroma-marketing, video and audio marketing as distinct areas of activity.

Among the components of sensory marketing, we consider it appropriate to focus on the mechanisms of olfactory influence and the creation of an olfactory profile, namely the formation of links between the emotional component and scents (scent branding, scent marketing, scent ecology, aromatherapy, etc.).

Analysis of recent researches and publications. Research into the impact of olfactory tools on human mood, state and behaviour has been carried out for a long time in various fields related to human activity. The most influential studies were those by R. Axel and L. Buck (1991), who discovered how the system of scent perception works and how the brain interprets scents within a model of olfactory perception and behaviour. The authors were awarded the Nobel Prize for this research. K. Warren and S. Warrenburg [16] investigated the influence of odours on mood. M. Lindstrom's work led to the emergence of a new field of research in neuromarketing, in which scent marketing is recognised as one of the tools which, in the author's view, 'of all the senses … is the most persuasive' [12]. Research into olfactory influences has become widespread; thus, review articles summarising

numerous research findings on the impact of scents in the fields of trade and marketing [10,13], psychology and business [11, 17], education [14] and even urban planning [13] deserve attention. Meanwhile, amongst Ukrainian researchers, olfactory influence is predominantly viewed as one of the components of marketing by N. Skryhun, T. Naumko [7], S. Klymyshyna [2], M. Oklander, Yu. Hubarieva [5], N. I. Horbal, Revutska [1], D. Mykhailenko, O. Bolotna, N. Davydenko [4]. Overviews of the practical application of fragrances are provided by companies offering fragrance services [6].

Setting objectives. The article is aimed at clarifying and specifying the ways in which olfactometric tools can influence consumers, and exploring the potential for wider use of this tool – not only to boost sales in the retail and marketing sectors and to enhance the comfort of visitors to service sector premises, but also as a key component in creating favourable conditions for staff productivity and emotional stability. A separate area of focus is to draw greater attention to the problems and negative aspects of using this tool, with a view to avoiding them in the day-to-day operations of organisations.

Presentation of the main research material. Of all sensory stimuli, it is smells that have a particular effect on brain processes. Only the sense of smell has a direct link to brain activity, exerting an influence that bypasses the cognitive component. All sensory information received is processed by the right hemisphere, with the exception of the sense of smell. The sense of smell is processed by the left hemisphere, parts of which are directly linked to the hypothalamus and the limbic system, which regulate metabolism, the functioning of the cardiovascular, digestive and excretory systems and the endocrine glands, as well as sleep patterns, emotions, memory and sexual behaviour. Smells influence the release of serotonin, dopamine and cortisol, which are responsible for a person's emotional state and can trigger physiological responses in the body. Aromacology is a distinct field that studies the effect of smells (primarily pleasant scents) on a person's physiological and psychological state.

The key point here is that scent triggers an emotional response which can influence our mood, behaviour and decision-making – which is, in fact, the very purpose of its use in advertising, retail and business sectors that deal directly with customers. Unlike visual or auditory stimuli, scents are capable of evoking instant emotional responses, and their effect can last for many years. Given that humans cannot help but breathe, their mood is heavily influenced by their olfactory environment – this is a physiological fact.

Based on numerous studies, experts have reached the unequivocal conclusion that a well-chosen scent can be a key factor that helps to [3,10,12]:

– extend the time customers spend in the shop;

– increase their loyalty, resulting not only from a high-quality product but also from a unique sensory experience during the process of purchasing or using it – an experience they wish to repeat and recommend;

– encourage repeat visits to retail outlets;

– motivate impulse purchases;

– increase average sales, improve the perception of product quality, and increase consumers' willingness to pay more for a product;

– enable a business to stand out from competitors or highlight a specific product segment;

–improve customers' perception of the quality of the goods and services on offer;

–emphasise the style, image and status of the establishment;

–address the issue of natural unpleasant odours (e.g. from a shop's fish counter, a restaurant kitchen or the musty smell in a semi-basement bar).

Studies show that, thanks to the 'right' air fragrance, a shop's sales can be increased by up to 15 per cent or more, without any redesigns or expansion of the product range [13].

The psychological effects of using fragrances are as follows:

– As scents are closely linked to memory and are most likely to trigger memories, establishing a lasting 'scent – advertising image' association in the target audience means that any source of a familiar scent will have an advertising effect.

– As people's impressions of smells are emotionally charged and smells influence a person's psychological and emotional state, accompanying an advert with a carefully selected scent can foster a positive emotional attitude towards the advertised product; consequently, the emotional component can influence demand to a greater extent than conventional advertising alone.

– As smells can influence people in many subtle ways of which they are unaware, it may be possible to use these subtle tools to enhance the motivational aspect of advertising.

– Given that, in today's world, people's visual and auditory senses are overloaded, utilising the less frequently used sense of smell holds great promise and will enable the desired advertising effect to be achieved with less advertising. It is easier to penetrate an uncluttered olfactory system than an overloaded visual or auditory one.

– When used correctly, scent will complement and enhance the effect of advertising, particularly visual advertising.

Scenting clothes and products helps to give them a fresh scent and make them more appealing to customers. A pleasant scent in a car during the sales process helps to create a positive first impression and boost the customer's trust in the salesperson. The scent of leather in a shop selling leather goods and footwear inspires confidence in the customer and boosts sales. A pleasant scent can be just as important a part of the overall impression as attractive packaging.

Scenting premises before selling or letting a property helps create a pleasant first impression on potential clients. A pleasant scent makes a flat feel cosier and more appealing.

Scent plays the greatest role in making a product or brand memorable. This creates competition not between products or their characteristics, but between the ways in which they are perceived [7].

The use of scents has long since ceased to be confined to the retail sector and is now becoming an

integral part of our lives, as well as other areas of service and business. It is important to note that scent marketing is suitable not only for retail companies but also for small businesses, as its implementation does not require significant expenditure. All it takes is a skilful selection of scents to create a unique atmosphere that will set a business apart from its competitors.

For example, in offices, citrus scents such as lemon or orange help to boost concentration and improve staff productivity. This creates a productive atmosphere that promotes effective work. To emphasise the style, image and status of the establishment;

Medical facilities often opt for the relaxing scents of mint and eucalyptus. These scents help to reduce stress levels in patients and create a more calming atmosphere.

Hotels and spas often use relaxing scents, such as lavender or sandalwood. These scents help guests to relax and enjoy their stay, evoking feelings of cosiness and comfort.

Another important area of olfactory influence is the elimination of unwanted odours. This involves freshening up a space and removing unpleasant smells (this has come to be recognised as a separate field known as 'aromacleaning'). This is particularly relevant for places with high footfall, where odours can spread quickly and cause discomfort (fish counters, kitchen odours, toilets, the musty smell in a semi-basement bar, etc.). People tend to associate the cleanliness and tidiness of a space with the overall quality of service, and even something as simple as a fresh scent can significantly influence their opinion.

The olfactory component has proved to be a key factor in a product's international competitiveness. Indeed, neuromarketing researcher M. Lindstrom noted in his book "Brand Sense" that in 85 per cent of cases, people make purchasing decisions on a subconscious level. This fact is borne out by a whole host of successful examples. For instance, 84 per cent of visitors of Nike preferred to shop in a department where a pleasant scent was present, despite a 10–20 per cent price difference compared to a scent-free department. Samsung also notes the impact of smell on shoppers – people spend, on average, a quarter longer in a scented section of a shop. In the US, scents have long been used in retail; this technology is employed by 60 per cent of companies, including giants such as Mercedes-Benz, Apple, Philips, Hilton and others.

Starbucks is reviving sensory branding to boost shop revenue and generate profit. One of the changes is that the shop has started grinding its own coffee to enhance its aroma. This is certainly a business decision. It is cheaper to supply pre-ground coffee, but Starbucks' management believes that any loss in in-store productivity will lead to greater customer loyalty and increased sales. The aroma of Starbucks coffee is easily recognisable all over the world. In order to preserve this unique aroma, the company stopped selling egg sandwiches for breakfast, as it turned out to be a sensory mistake: the aroma of the egg sandwich clashed with that of the coffee. Starbucks staff are strictly prohibited from wearing perfume or deodorant, or from smoking, as the odours from these products may mingle with the Starbucks aroma, thereby distorting the customer experience.

This approach has also been successfully adopted in other countries. For instance, to emphasise its corporate identity, Singapore Airlines commissioned the fragrance 'Stefan Floridian' in 1990, and this scent became a unique and distinctive element of its branding, ranging from the flight attendants' perfume, the scent of the in-flight newspapers, the scent inside the aircraft, and the warm towels handed out to passengers just before take-off; this scent is permitted to permeate the entire in-flight experience. This scent subsequently became part of the travel experience offered to passengers and has become a hallmark of Singapore Airlines [15].

In Ukraine, scent marketing is only just beginning to gain ground. Small businesses use it to attract customers into their sales areas (the smell of freshly baked goods, the aroma of coffee, and so on), which encourages customers to visit the premises, spend more time in the shop and, consequently, make more purchases. Among large companies, the following use scent marketing in their premises: Bershka, O'stin, Intertop, Helen Marlen, Epicentre, the 'Planeta Kino' cinema, Salateira, Roshen, the Skoda showroom, Family Bakery, the Silpo supermarket chain and others. [7].

The business world has also taken an interest in the influence of scents, discovering that employees' productivity increases when surrounded by pleasant fragrances. In 1939, the physiologist D. I. Shatenshtein scientifically substantiated and experimentally demonstrated that certain olfactory stimuli affect many functions, particularly work performance. There are examples of companies in Japan that have successfully applied this method. They release specific scents into the air-conditioning systems in their buildings so that everyone at their workstation can experience a particular scent. One construction corporation even uses a computerised system to distribute scents throughout all its buildings. Such scenting enhances the productivity of workers who are usually engaged in routine tasks.

To this end, the Japanese firm 'Sumitsu' set up special relaxation rooms for staff who felt the need to recharge their batteries. Managers of large companies were advised to spray 'aromatic stimulants' before calling staff together for important meetings. Sumitsu has developed over 20 different phyto-compositions – scents derived from flowers and plants – to improve the performance of programmers and typists, as a scented environment reduces the number of errors made by office workers. The number of errors made by programmers decreased when they inhaled the scent of jasmine – by 3 per cent, lavender – by 20 per cent, and lemon – by 54 per cent [11].

Experiments have shown that inhaling the scent of lemon, eucalyptus or musk alleviates feelings of tiredness, stimulates the nervous system, aids mental work and boosts productivity. Rosemary aids the learning process and stimulates memory. Rose enhances the ability to concentrate and complete tasks quickly.

It is used across a wide range of sectors: banking, non-food retail, healthcare and the arts. The scent is

chosen so that people enjoy being in the room, experience the emotions required for that particular business, and to create a pleasant working atmosphere. When working one-to-one with a client, essential oil can be used as a personalised fragrance.

In the context of a banking institution, for instance, the pivotal terms are 'prestige' and 'reliability'. The creation of this image may be facilitated by the utilisation of olfactory elements such as wood, sandalwood, colognes designed for gentlemen, and the scent of fine leather. It has been demonstrated that children have the capacity to persuade their parents to enter a retail establishment if the ambient scent is that of vanilla or chocolate.

Aromatherapy has been shown to be an efficacious method of reducing stress and enhancing general well-being, owing to its capacity to influence an individual's emotional state. This phenomenon can be attributed to the capacity of scents to stimulate specific regions of the brain associated with emotional processing. For instance, the scent of lavender has been demonstrated to have a calming effect, in addition to its ability to reduce cortisol levels, the stress hormone. This renders lavender a valuable asset in everyday scenarios where stress is a factor.

Practical methods of using aromatherapy include:

1) Scenting a room to create a particular mood and atmosphere.

2) Aroma design, which involves stimulating emotions and creating a specific atmosphere using different scents. Scents are selected to complement the interior style, its design and colour scheme;

3) Aroma branding, where a specific scent is chosen to serve as the brand’s signature; this creates what is known as an ‘aromatic logo’, meaning the brand is associated with a composition that is subconsciously remembered by customers, so that whenever the scent is encountered, people will associate it with that particular brand.

4) Scenting of printed materials – from periodicals to booklets, business cards or leaflets.

5) Scented souvenirs featuring the brand’s signature scent [6].

Notwithstanding its relative simplicity, scent marketing is subject to a number of caveats that must be given full consideration. As scents have been demonstrated to influence the long-term retention of emotions triggered by them, consumers will remember both positive and negative emotions or impressions for a significant period. A number of issues have already been identified by researchers in relation to the use of scent marketing. These are outlined below:

1. In the contemporary business landscape, a significant proportion of enterprises have adopted synthetic scents, such as the aroma of coffee or freshly baked goods, in their operations. These scents have the potential to exert an ambiguous effect on the health of visitors and staff members. These substances have been demonstrated to elicit allergic responses and have the capacity to bioaccumulate within the human organism. The utilisation of air fresheners is recommended exclusively in large supermarkets characterised by effective ventilation and elevated ceilings. It has been demonstrated that sales personnel operating within high-end perfume departments frequently exhibit individual intolerance to scents. Perfume retail chains characteristically encounter elevated levels of staff turnover.

Consequently, all fragrances utilised are required to adhere to the quality and safety criteria stipulated by the International Fragrance Association (IFRA). It has been demonstrated that natural, pure essential oils are more efficacious in attracting customers than artificial fragrances. However, the expense of these devices can be a significant barrier for many individuals, limiting their accessibility. This may be considered a potential disadvantage of the product.

2. It is imperative that the emotional response evoked by the fragrance is congruent with the brand or the characteristics of the product. In the event that a brand's marketing strategy is oriented towards promoting luxury and exclusivity, it is recommended that a scent be selected that is capable of evoking such sentiments, with potential options including leather, sandalwood, or rose. In the context of marketing a product to young consumers, it is recommended that the fragrance be reminiscent of berries or bubble gum, thereby aligning with the desired youthful ambience.

3. It is recommended by researchers that one should avoid commencing with complex fragrances comprising numerous notes. Instead, the use of simple, familiar fragrances is advised, as these are generally more effective in stimulating consumer spending. Consequently, it is advisable to refrain from selecting overly potent fragrances. The application of fragrance in excess, or the introduction of excess complexity too rapidly, can yield unintended consequences. Simple, familiar scents, such as citrus, vanilla or light floral notes, have been shown to have a positive effect on mood, to increase the time shoppers spend in the shop and to create positive associations with the brand. It is imperative to recognise that potent or intricate fragrances have the potential to overwhelm consumers, particularly if they do not align with the brand identity of the establishment.

4. In the context of multisensory marketing, researchers have observed a phenomenon known as a mismatch between the scent and music components of an advertising campaign.

5. Researchers have observed a phenomenon known as 'scent fatigue' as a result of the use of a single scent over an extended period. Alternatively, companies may implement a periodic alteration of scents, for instance, once or twice a month. The alteration of olfactory sensations in accordance with the prevailing season is an efficacious method of sustaining a sense of freshness.

6. Furthermore, climatic conditions must be considered when assessing the feasibility of such a project. For instance, in regions with a cold climate, customers have been observed to prefer more intense fragrances, warm colours, soft lighting and cosy textures, whilst in southern regions, fresh fragrances and light materials are more popular.

7. Multisensory communications must be adapted to local consumer behaviour patterns. The personalisation

of the sensory experience is predicated on audience segmentation and an understanding of each group's characteristics. Multisensory communications have been demonstrated to facilitate the creation of a unique customer experience for each segment, thereby enhancing brand recall and loyalty.

In the context of international trade, cultural characteristics must be taken into account. Cultural differences in sensory marketing determine how consumers perceive smells, colours, music and other brand stimuli on an emotional level. It is imperative to acknowledge these variations when formulating effective marketing strategies, as sensory cues can function in divergent ways across diverse geographical locations and cultural contexts.

Scents are deeply rooted in Chinese culture (traditional incense), which is why modern brands combine them with aromatherapy to reduce stress among customers. Scent marketing in China transforms an ordinary space into an appealing environment, which is crucial in a competitive market.

It is important to avoid sensory stimuli that may evoke negative emotions or be misinterpreted. For example, overly pungent scents or aggressive music may put off part of the audience. Mistakes often arise when attempting to mechanically copy others' solutions without taking into account the specifics of the business and the audience. Sensory marketing requires a tailored approach, constant analysis and flexible adaptation.

Furthermore, there are significant differences across cultures in terms of which sensory modality we prefer – visual, auditory, gustatory, tactile or olfactory. And this is reflected first and foremost in language [14]. For instance, English has one of the richest vocabularies for describing colours and geometric shapes, but it also has noticeably fewer words for describing smells.

The sense of smell has the capacity to enhance the experience of a variety of media, including music, films, computer games and virtual reality programmes. Nevertheless, this domain has received comparatively less research attention than other fields, such as computer graphics and audio. The majority of contemporary olfactory displays are designed for a specific experiment; they are difficult to modify and scale up, expensive and/or can reproduce only a very limited number of scents. Moreover, contemporary olfactory displays are not equipped with the capacity to determine the optimal timing and modalities of scent release. The display incorporates an intelligent algorithm that determines the timing of the release of specific scents. The device's controller software supports the release of scents based on a timer, text with English subtitles, or input from external software applications. This facilitates the release of scents at specific times, a feature that is particularly advantageous for gaming applications. The device also supports built-in integration with games developed using the game engine created as part of this project.

Conclusions and prospects for further research in the area. The use of fragrances can be traced back to the ancient civilisations of Egypt, India, China, and ancient Greece and Rome. Scent marketing is not merely a passing trend; rather, it is a tried and tested method of fostering an emotional connection with customers. The careful selection of scents has been demonstrated to influence purchasing decisions, enhance the enjoyment of being in a space, and strengthen brand association. The strategic application of olfactory tools has been demonstrated to enhance customer attraction, prolong customer retention, and cultivate brand loyalty.

It is evident that brands make use of sensory stimuli, namely sight and hearing, to communicate with consumers. It is evident that these channels are already experiencing significant congestion. Auditory and visual impressions are rapidly forgotten, as they are consciously perceived by people and subject to rational evaluation. In contrast, scents influence the subconscious, are perceived more emotionally, are associated with a particular image and are remembered for a long time. This mechanism is used in the context of scent marketing. This underscores the efficacy of scent marketing as a contemporary strategy for attracting consumers and fostering a welcoming environment. The use of the underutilised sense of smell holds considerable promise, given that it is an inherent physiological process that is impossible to avoid.

The influence of scent on emotions and memory has rendered the psychological aspect of olfaction a potent instrument in the pursuit of consumer loyalty within competitive international markets.

However, it is imperative to acknowledge the subtleties and refinements inherent in this discipline. The deployment of excessively pungent fragrances has the potential to rapidly engender dissatisfaction among customers. In today's increasingly stressful world, the potential impact of scents should be valued and utilised more.

In order to enhance a company's operational efficiency and fortify its competitive position, it is imperative to employ and cultivate scent marketing instruments that augment the efficacy of scents' impact on consumers. Subsequent scientific research will be directed towards addressing these issues.

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