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DESIGNED FOR THE HOLIDAYS

Add the Spice of Persuasive Design to Keep the Holiday Tills Ringing

Just what is it about the smell of cinnamon and cloves that ushers in the holiday season? The aromas, vibrant reds and greens, cheery holiday music—they all signify that the annual retail spectacular is afoot.
On the surface, it appears to be merely a subscription of the merriment of the season, but on a subconscious level, all the sights and sounds of holiday

retail are a deliberate, strategic means of connecting with consumers emotionally. Sensory triggers are so effective in persuading consumer behavior that experts suggest it can increase sales by up to 300 percent.
Atmospherics, or the study of retail spaces, is the science that backs up this strategy.

Follow the Brick-and-Mortar Example

The Impact of 3D Virtual Haptics in Marketing, a research report from Psychology and Marketing, documented that auto retailers whose consumers physically touched and interacted with cars had more positive product evaluations, experienced more enjoyment during the test-driving phase and exhibited a stronger connection with the brand. Similarly, Cinnabon, a baked goods retailer, sets up kiosks in high-traffic areas and uses the aroma of a proprietary spice blend to seduce passersby.

Dr. Alan Hirsch, founder of the Smell & Taste Treatment and Research Foundation (Chicago), notes that good smells create a halo effect that positively affects consumers' moods. According to Hirsch, "if something smells good, it is good. If you view a product in a positive way, you are more likely to buy."

Online retail brands may not have the ability to use cinnamon to capture shoppers' attention, but they do have a significant opportunity to use interactive tools in much the same way. Online retailers can use technology to affect consumer sensibilities through design, including interactive mechanisms, aesthetics and applications that add value. All of these techniques encourage a pleasurable shopping experience

and engage consumers using a variety of sensory methods.

Three Ways to Harness Sensory Triggers

There are three persuasive design tools that are especially effective in triggering consumers sensually: social, urgency, and authority.

- ▶ Firstly, designs incorporate social media tools to persuade consumers to evangelize and reap the benefits of exposure to multiple networks.
- ▶ Secondly, design that illustrates scarcity, such as time tickers and inventory data, is effective in consumer persuasion. For instance, Groupon uses a clock and publishes the number of purchases for each of its ephemeral deals. These techniques translate a sense of urgency and help consumers feel more comfortable in reaching a buying decision quickly since others "have done it." This is especially important for relatively unknown or new online retailers, which may cause consumers to be skeptical at the point of sale.
- ▶ Thirdly, testimonials persuade consumers to buy by establishing brand authority through the use of real world, narrative examples of cus-

tomers satisfaction. This is particularly effective in targeting women consumers, who account for some 83 percent of all consumer spending.

Use Captology to Reach Target Consumers

Captology, a term that Dr. BJ Fogg and his Stanford University team at the Persuasive Technology Lab coined and studied extensively, is the concept of using technology to influence consumer behavior. Using Facebook as an example, he shows how touch points stimulate consumer interaction and involvement to achieve a desired behavior. An excellent example of captology is Jawbone's UP wristband, which passively collects health-related data and sends it to

an application when synched online, so consumers can make purposeful healthy lifestyle changes.

How do sensory persuasive techniques translate into online retail markets? They illustrate the role of interaction in influencing consumer purchasing decisions and brand evangelism.

To be persuasive, design technology needs to bring an aesthetically sound framework to the table, in addition to utility, to allow consumer customization and [persuasion]. With consumers already motivated to make [non-essential] purchases, the season is ripe for brands to put their best marketing foot forward when it comes to optimizing design technology to persuade them to do so.



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