

## Smell the difference

The sense of smell has long been neglected as a means of conveying information about food items. One company from the UK hopes to change this however, as it revolutionises the packaging and POP areas of retail food vending by introducing aroma to the browsing consumer

**B**iscuits share the same commercial pressures as the rest of the food and fast moving goods market: most notably lack of advertising cut-through, pressure on margins and the competitive threat posed by own label.

In an ultimately commoditised market there is only ever one winner: the lowest cost provider. To protect themselves against this trend towards commoditisation, biscuit manufacturers need to seek out ways to engage their consumers at the emotional level. It is only when people are engaged at an emotional level that they will return time and again and price sensitivity drops down their list of buying criteria. Manufacturers looking to recruit and retain consumers of higher than average lifetime value need to concentrate upon ways of achieving the necessary emotional engagement.

### The communications environment

We live in a world of communications overload. Brands compete relentlessly to attract our attention and awaken our interest to the point at which they hope we will buy their product.

This intensity of competition creates a huge wall of noise directed at our eyes and ears – the two senses that are traditionally used to communicate messages.

As the level of communication has increased, so too has our ability to screen out those messages through either physical or mental avoidance. Twenty-five years ago an advertiser of a mass market product could reach 80% of the UK population by buying just three TV advertising slots. It now requires the purchase of 65 TV slots to reach the same number percentage of the population.

Twenty-five years ago there were no video recorders allowing us to fast forward through the adverts, no satellite television and no devices such as Tivo to enable us to omit the adverts from recordings.

Just as the number of TV channels has increased exponentially, there has also been a wide scale proliferation of radio stations and consumer interest magazines. It has become



much more difficult to find consumers and much more difficult to engage them.

Moreover, our eyes and our ears are interpretive senses; they interpret what they see and hear and decide what message to take out of them. In an increasingly media savvy world, we are more and more inclined to reject advertising messages.

### The power of the sense of smell

Smell has unique attributes as a communications channel and yet it is little understood by

the marketing community – strange when you consider the billions of dollars we spend annually on fine fragrances to send signals to those who we wish to attract or those we wish to remind of our presence.

The sense of smell communicates directly with the limbic system, which is the part of the brain that controls our emotions and memories. Unlike sight and sound, the sense of smell is not interpretive but chemosensory. The signal is transmitted directly into the brain, which then sends out action signals on receipt of the message.

As much as 80% of what we taste is in fact aroma. We only have the ability to decode four basic tastes on our tongue; the remainder of what we perceive to be flavour is the aroma that travels from our mouth through the retro-nasal canal into the limbic system.

## How aroma can help marketers

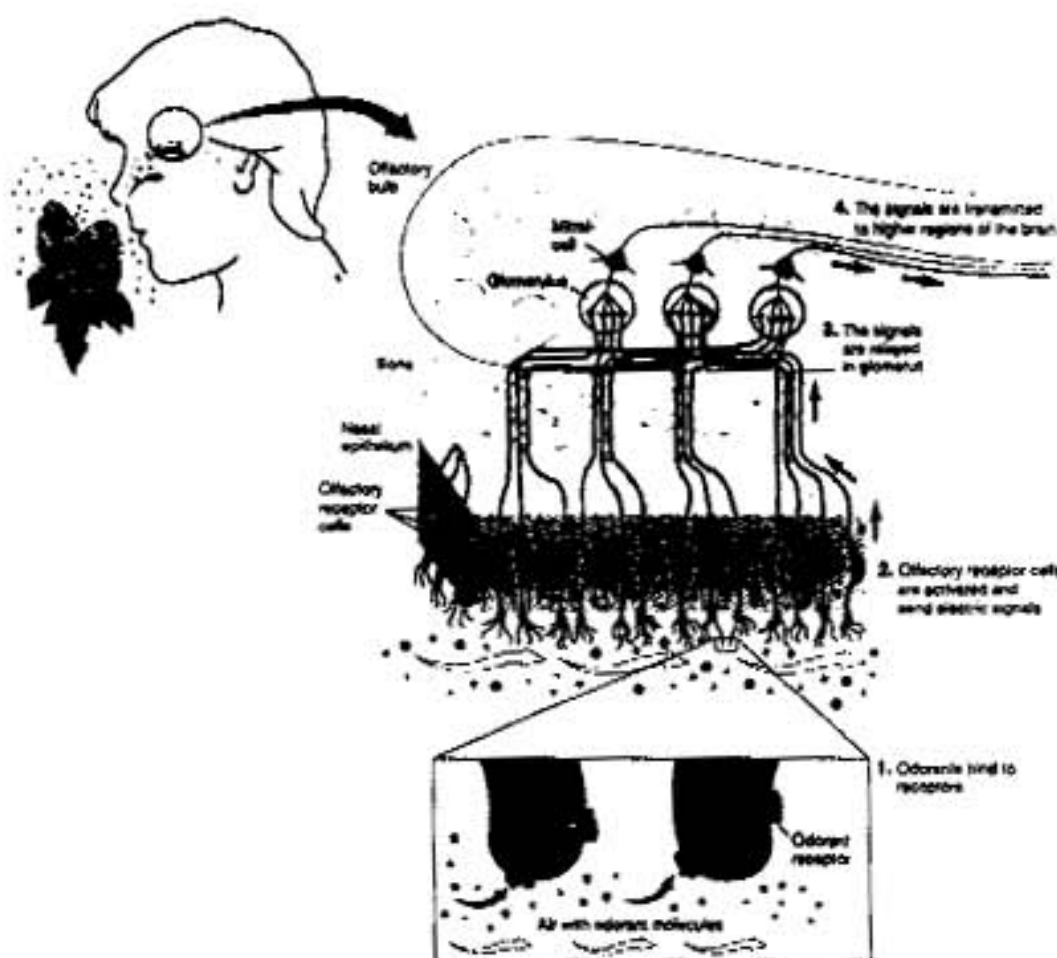
Most biscuits have a pleasant smell. The problem is that by using traditional marketing methods we only get the benefit of this investment once a consumer has bought the product.

However, aroma can now be used ahead of purchase to engage consumers with this key product attribute through a range of executions. These include creating an ambient aroma at or near a display and placing shelf talkers equipped with 'squeeze and sniff' interactive or passive devices on retailer shelving. Consumers can be offered the opportunity to engage either passively or interactively.

Over the past year, we have been seeing greater interest in two areas in particular: the application of aroma to printed material such as direct mail, shelf ready packaging and larger display items such as dump bins. Different technologies exist that enable consumers to release an aroma via touch or to experience the aroma through the application of a slow release varnish, which emanates an aroma away from a shelf or display unit over a period of time.

The next area in which we expect an explosion of interest is added value packaging. There is now the technology to apply aroma to both the inside and the outside of the plastic films used in the manufacture of packaging. When applied to the outside this allows a consumer to sample the aroma / flavour by rubbing their fingers across the surface of the packaging. When applied to the inside, it is capable of reversing an unwelcome process known as scalping whereby the packaging

## Odorant Receptors and the Organisation of the Olfactory System



draws flavour away from its contents. This new technology, which embeds the aroma into the film laminate reel before shipping to the converter, enables a burst of aroma to be created as the package is opened. Aroma can also be applied to the cold seal or hot seal lacquer of secondary packaging to enhance that vitally important first experience of a product.

As differentiation becomes more and more important in warding off commoditisation, the use of the latest aroma communication techniques can help branded manufacturers deliver innovation and engage consumers at the point of sale - where the prospect, the product, the buying opportunity and the wallet all coincide - to deliver a quantifiable and more effective marketing programme.

With a culture of innovation and a passion for the sense of smell, The Aroma Company has evolved a variety of leading edge solutions to help clients promote their products and services and to present their own brand's aroma to consumers.

In the air, on paper, packaging and print or interactively through multiple media, aromas create awareness and emotional engagement through the most evocative of the senses.

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