Not Just What We See, But Also What We Smell: Implicit Associations of Tropical Fragrances

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SYSTEM 1 (implicit) can automatically, unintentionally, uncontrollably, and in some way nonconsciously influence consumer behavior independently from SYSTEM 2 (explicit).
Because of this, we need more ways (than only explicit) to collect data.
Implicit methods have been developed, one family of which are implicit association response tasks.
Implicit measures are indirect. For instance, they can prime with a stimulus of interest, then ask about something else.
Most consumer research stimuli are visual — they rely on what we see.
Fewer studies involve implicit associations with other sensory stimuli...
Including our sense of smell, of which fragrances apply.
Since many products are fragrance-critical, we decided to explore implicit associations with fragrances.
Assesses the emotional dynamics of consumer behavior—including those that are nonconscious, from System 1.

Develops flavors and fragrances for some of the world’s most successful food, beverage, fine fragrance, household, and personal care products.

Singularly focused on consumer and sensory research for CPG innovation: the consumer need, the concept, the formulation, the packaging.
Most tropical fragrances play on a relaxing theme.

Our client had an opening in their portfolio for something more vibrant, uplifting, energizing.
Needed research to support an “energizing” brief; also show that it “ladders up” to win on overall opinion (i.e., “hedonics”).
Conducted explicit evaluations of 4 fragrances (real brands, names disguised).

Evaluated them overall and for 10 attributes, the key being happy, sexy, energized, bored, comforted, relaxed, and irritating.
Consumers entered a fragranced booth.

Completed explicit hedonics and selected which attributes apply.

Moved to the next booth and repeated 1-2 for next fragrance.
Overall Liking
7-pt. Scale

Fragrance A: 5.62
Fragrance B: 5.57
Fragrance C: 5.86
Fragrance D: 5.53
### Explicit Associations

*Standardized Scores*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Fragrance A</th>
<th>Fragrance B</th>
<th>Fragrance C</th>
<th>Fragrance D</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Happy</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexy</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Energized</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bored</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comforted</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relaxed</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irritated</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Conducted implicit evaluations of the 4 fragrances for the same attributes.

Used an adaptation of Payne’s Affect Misattribution Procedure (AMP).
In same booth, after hedonics and explicit attribute selection...

With fragrance as the prime, respondents saw ambiguous pictographs...

and selected which attributes they conveyed (after pictograph disappeared).
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Action Steps – Not Business as Usual

**EXPLICIT**

- Significant parity, although Fragrance D was directionally less appealing.
- However, Fragrance D fit the energizing brief.
- Chalk up the win for Fragrance D.
- But don’t feel great about it. (Why directionally less appealing?)

**IMPLICIT**

- Completely disruptive
- Fragrance B triggers energy immediately (System 1) BEFORE consumers can rationalize it away. Why?
- Multi cell HUT.
- Deeper look at Concept fit/holistic mix.
- Hidden win? A bigger niche?
SUMMARY

- Implicit reactions exist and can influence decisions and behavior.
- Implicit methods mostly assess visual stimuli. However...
- Products largely depend on other senses to communicate value.
- Implicit reactions via other senses, at least smell, can be measured.
- This can aid product development across sense modalities.