

“Juice or Image? Which Should Come First?”

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Juice or Image? Which Should Come First?

In attempting to analyze the successes and failures of fragrance brands it is not always easy to pinpoint the precise reason for a given brand's success or failure. The two dominant components for success are clearly a brand's image and of course the fragrance or "juice" itself. This presentation will examine some of the findings of the FragranceTrack study as they relate to consumer based brand image and blind fragrance ratings of 25 leading prestige fine fragrance brands in the U.S. Before examining the relative importance of the "juice" and "image" in today's marketing context, let's first examine the historical context of a brand's image and fragrance and show how the relative importance of the two has dramatically changed over time.

Olfactive Prestige

When fragrances were originally commercialized in France they were sold through perfumeries. The original perfumeries were operated by artisan perfumers. Each perfumer sold his unique creations either as "house blends" available to the general public or would create "custom blends" for wealthy and noble clients. The very best of these perfumers were able to attract the most prestigious clientele such as nobles or even members of the royal family.

When fragrances were first commercialized they were sold based on their olfactive qualities and characteristics. The house or brand image came from the prestige of the clients who purchased and wore the fragrances. The more prestigious the clientele, the more prestigious became the reputation of the Perfumery. A perfect example is the House of Guerlain. When Pierre-Francois-Pascale Guerlain created Eau de Cologne Imperiale in 1853 for the Empress Eugenie (the wife of the second Louis Napoleon) it brought great notoriety to the House of Guerlain. Other famous perfumery houses of the late 19th and early 20th centuries included Coty, Lenthéric, and Yardley; all had prestigious clients. Yardley received several Royal Warrants from the British Royal Family.

Couture Fragrances

With the emergence of fragrances from fashion designers in the 1920's, the primary basis for a fragrance brand's prestige or "image" was transformed. In 1921 Coco Chanel launched the classic *Chanel No. 5*. This was followed a few years later by *Arpege* from the House of Lanvin in 1927 and then *Je Reviens* from the House of Worth in 1932. The tradition of fragrance attached to the imagery of the prestigious couture houses became the predominant means - or "reason why" - for establishing a fragrance's image. This trend continued to dominate the fragrance business for approximately 50 years. Each succeeding decade saw numerous designer fragrance launches. In the forties classics launched on the

backs of couture houses included *Miss Dior* from Christian Dior in 1947, *Fracas* from Robert Piguet in 1948, and *L'Air du Temps* from Nina Ricci also in 1948.

The tradition of fragrance imagery attached to couture houses continued in the 50's, 60's and 70's with fragrances from Fath, Balenciaga, Rochas, Yves Saint Laurent, Balmain, Givenchy and many others. In the late 40's and early 50's we also saw a new image endorsement from cosmetic companies such as Elizabeth Arden, Bourjois, Helena Rubenstein, L'Oréal and Estée Lauder followed by Revlon and Avon. Still, the majority of launches up until the 1970's remained associated with fashion designers. Most of the fragrances had little or no marketing concept. Names usually evoked a fashion reference or designer nickname such as *Diorissimo* from Christian Dior, *Y* from Yves Saint Laurent or *Madame Rochas*. Most of the Men's fragrances had rather generic names such as *Pour Monsieur* from Chanel, *Monsieur Balmain* or *Monsieur Lanvin*.

From Couture to Concept

In the mid sixties we began to see the emergence of a marketing concept as the "reason why" to buy a fragrance. Most of these began in the mass market. A few examples included *Brut* from Faberge (1964), *Hai Karate* from Leeming Pacquin (1967) and *Charlie* (1973) from Revlon. *Fidji* from Guy Laroche (1966) was one of the earliest examples in the prestige market to use a marketing concept. This move towards creating aspirational imagery based on a concept marked a significant change in fragrance marketing. The primary reason for buying the fragrance was no longer for the fragrance or even the designer name, but for the aspirational image it presented.

Opium in 1977 was one of the first designer fragrances to make the name and image of the fragrance brand more important than the designer name. In 1978 Estée Lauder combined an image and life style to create *White Linen*. Both of these classic examples did an extraordinary job of marrying an olfactive style with an image. In the case of *Opium* the sensuous and exotic spicy oriental note was in perfect harmony with the drug taboo of the name and sexy images of the advertising. The floral aldehydic characteristic of *White Linen* was a perfect compliment to the clean images evoked by the model wearing white linen clothes. The attached chart summarizes the evolution of the "reason why" in fragrance marketing.

The Proliferation of the Marketing Concept

The eighties saw the emergence of the mega brands. These brands all had unique concepts and coherent marketing mixes. These brands were often accompanied by very provocative images and scents as well as ever increasing launch budgets. Calvin Klein's *Obsession* launched in 1985 perfectly captured the promiscuous sexuality of the eighties. Together its name, bottle, advertising and fragrance

created a perfectly congruous marketing mix. *Poison* from Christian Dior was another great example. Suddenly the criteria for success had changed. These fragrances showed that a great concept, bottle, image and fragrance with the added endorsement of a designer label was the secret to success and that success could mean sales in excess of \$50 million.

Timing - The Other Key to Success

Over the past 10 - 15 years the greatest successes have combined all of these elements and one more - timing! The best examples not only have a coherent marketing mix where the name, bottle advertising and fragrance all combine to form one message, but also were launched at the right time to coincide with the socio-economic trends of the period. *Opium* (1978) perfectly reflected the heavy drug use of the sixties and seventies. *Obsession* (1985) captured the sexual promiscuity of the early eighties. *Eternity* (1988) represented the return to romance and monogamy as a result of the AIDS crisis. *Vanilla Fields* (1993) reflected the consumer's desire to return to their roots, seek simplicity and to stay at home. *CK One* (1994) mirrored the grunge trend and the new Generation X. *Polo Sport* (1994) represented the trend towards fitness and casual dressing. When you examine the top selling classics we also find great coherence between the brand's image, packaging and fragrance - the best examples are *Chanel No. 5* (1921) and *l'Air du Temps* (1948) which are still big sellers.

Juice or Image Which Should Come First?

Now that we have examined the historical context and relative importance of a fragrance brand's image and scent, let's address the question of which should come first in developing a new brand. Our FragranceTrack study has given us an excellent tool from which to try and answer this question. Typically fragrance marketing companies start with a name or a concept and try to develop a coherent mix for that concept which includes a name, package, advertising and of course a fragrance. Once the brand is launched its success is tied to a combination of these elements. Whether a brand succeeds or fails it is very difficult to pinpoint the precise reasons for success or failure. The two principle factors in ultimate success or failure, however, are clear - the brand's image and its fragrance.

The FragranceTrack study is able to isolate these two factors. By asking identified brand imagery questions amongst a representative sample of consumers who are aware of the brand, the study is able to objectively measure a brand's image and compare this to the average of other brands. By also testing fragrances blind on-skin amongst a demographically balanced sample, the study is also able to determine how well a fragrance is liked by consumers and for what reasons.

The results of our study of the 25 leading brands suggests that the most important factor of the two is the brand's image. This is evidenced by the success of some brands despite relatively poor blind fragrance test results. The importance of brand imagery is further underscored by the fact that a few brands which had outstanding blind fragrance ratings but which had poor brand imagery scores are known to be relative failures in the market place. There are no examples of a fragrance that is extremely well liked with a poor image which is considered a big success. However, those few fragrances which combine an excellent blind fragrance test result with an excellent image, and especially one which is coherent with the blind fragrance profile, are all top sellers.

The above findings seem to indicate that in developing a new brand the image should come first and the fragrance should come second. Certainly no great success can be achieved without a strong image even if the fragrance is outstanding. However, there is no definitive evidence to suggest that once a winning fragrance theme is identified that it could not be simply combined with a great image and achieve excellent results. In other words, if you have a great brand image and a fragrance which is widely accepted, the brand should do very well in the marketplace. This would suggest that it would be perfectly reasonable to develop a winning fragrance theme first and then attach it to a good concept. Ultimately, however, the brands with a good concept and a well liked fragrance which also helps evoke or support the brand's image will prove to be the biggest successes.

The Timing Factor

Just as an image has its time and place as demonstrated by brands such as Obsession and Eternity, so too does a fragrance. In analyzing the results of our FragranceTrack study we have identified the notion of "Fragrance Fashionability". A multi-variant mapping analysis of blind fragrance attributes suggests that fragrance themes come into and go out of fashion in much the same way as clothes.

In the attached map, 25 fragrances which were tested blindly have been mapped according to their relative positioning in respect to approximately 30 attributes. This map shows that those fragrances to the right side of the map have the most positive attributes such as "pleasant", "beautiful", "fresh and clean" and importantly are found to be more "contemporary and modern" and "mostly for younger women". Those fragrances to the left side of the map are perceived to have more negative qualities such as "chemical", "harsh", "heavy" and are also found to be more "old fashioned" and "mostly for older women".

Each fragrance in our study is depicted on the map according to its year of launch. Here we can clearly see that with few exceptions nearly all of the most recent

launches are to the far right of the map while most of the oldest brands are to the left. Interestingly we also see the launches which are 5-10 years old are also mostly to the right of the map but not to the same extent as the most recent launches.

This map suggests that consumers can smell the difference between fragrances which are new or “in fashion” vs. those which have been around a while or which are “out of fashion”. The relative position on the map therefore suggests a given brand’s “fragrance fashionability”. The implication for new launches is that it is extremely important to choose a fragrance theme which is “in fashion”. Interestingly the study demonstrates that this quality can be measured through blind testing and use of this mapping technique.

Summary

The two keys to a fragrance brand’s success are the brand’s image and the fragrance itself. Of these two, the image is the most important factor for success. However, a review of the biggest successes suggests that it is also very important that the concept and brand image reflect the socio-economic trends prevalent at the time of launch. A well liked fragrance is also key to a brand’s success. However, besides being well liked a fragrance must also be “in fashion”. The “image” a “juice” projects and its “fashionability” can both be determined through blind testing. Ultimately the most successful brands reflect a socio-economic trend and have a coherent mix which includes an enticing image and a fragrance which is not only well liked but also evokes the same qualities as the brand image.

Fragrance Marketing

Evolution Of The “Reason Why”

| <u>Time Period</u> | <u>Principle Reason Why</u> | <u>Examples</u> |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------|---|
| 19 th Century to 1920 | Prestige of Fragrance House | Guerlain Yardley Coty |
| 1920's to 1970 | Designer Endorsement | Chanel Lanvin Christian Dior Yves Saint Laurent |
| 1950's to 1970 | Cosmetic House Endorsement | Elizabeth Arden Estee Lauder Revlon Avon |
| 1970's to Present | Marketing Concept | Charlie (1973) Opium (1978) Obsession (1985) Poison (1985) Eternity (1988) CK One (1994) |