

The Influence of Scents on Product Color Choice

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Abstract

This research explores whether and when scents can influence product color choices. While color is an important aspect of branding and product assortment, research examining the drivers of product color choice has been limited. In this research, we suggest and show that retailers and service providers can nudge specific color choices with strategic use of ambient scent. A series of studies, including a field study, demonstrate that cool (vs. warm) scents increase preference for products with shorter (e.g., blue) than longer (e.g., red) wavelength colors, driven by semantic temperature cross-modal correspondence. The effect varies based on the strengths of the scent-temperature association and attenuates when other semantically incongruent temperature cues (verbal references such as “hot/cool deals”) are present.

Keywords: cross-modal correspondence, sensory marketing, temperature.

Track: Consumer Behavior.