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## Imagining The Smell Of Cake Will Actually Make You Buy More Cake, Researchers Find

By [Kate Cox](#) February 11, 2014

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(micah.d)

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Anyone who doesn't believe that smell sells has clearly never spent a year living in an apartment immediately above a local gourmet bakery. Who can resist the smell of freshly-baked bread

first thing in the morning? Nobody, that's who. Scent is a powerful trigger.

But now science is finding that you don't actually need to smell something for the smell-effect to entice you. Imagining that bakery will apparently make you drool just as much as standing right next to it will.

A study published in the *Journal of Consumer Research* ([PDF](#)) found that subjects presented with a picture of chocolate cake salivated equally when either actually handed something with chocolate cake smell, or encouraged to imagine the chocolate cake smell.

The researchers liken the effect to that of a visualization exercise, and call it "smellization." (Yes, really.)

As the scientists found, the smellization effect cannot exist in a vacuum; it needs visual triggers. Like, say, a photo of delicious chocolate cake, and a tagline about delicious chocolate cake. Mmm, cake:

*In one study, participants viewed the advertising tagline, "Feel like a chocolate cake?" Some participants were shown just the tagline and others were shown the tagline accompanied by a photo of a chocolate cake. The participants were then asked to either smell a sachet with the fragrance of chocolate cake, imagine the scent of chocolate cake, or neither.*

*As the researchers expected, smelling the cake increased salivation for all participants. They did, however, note an increase in salivation in participants who viewed the advertisement containing both the photo and the tagline when the cake smell was completely removed (compared to people who just viewed the tagline).*

The upshot of all that olfactory-based literal drooling? Those who do it also drool over products in a somewhat more metaphorical sense. An item for which consumers literally salivate is one they both buy and consume in larger quantities. So if you're trying to cut back on the cookies, do yourself a favor and *don't* think about how they smell next time you see an ad.

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