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DRILLING DOWN

It's the Scent That Tickles the Memory

By ALEX MINDLIN

Only recently have companies begun assigning smells to everyday products: frangipani-scented sewing threads, tires that smell like roses. A paper soon to be published in the *Journal of Consumer Research* confirms the wisdom of this tactic, finding that scented products linger in the memory.

In one experiment, the researchers, posing as marketers, asked 151 college students to examine a brand-name pencil, along with a 10-point list of its selling points. Some of the pencils were unscented, and some had been dosed with pine or tea tree oil. Two weeks later, the average student could not remember a single attribute of the scentless pencil, but remembered more than three attributes of the scented pencils. Students were not provided with the scent, which could jog their memory.

"The human memory for smell is very strong, and researchers have known all along that people remember smell," said Aradhna Krishna, a professor of marketing at the [University of Michigan](#)'s business school who is one of the paper's authors. "What we're saying is, it's not just the smell that people remember. It's other things associated with the smell: the brand name, or the shape of the product's box." ALEX MINDLIN

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