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## Research makes smell a new technique for marketing

By [JULIA LISS](#)

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[/PEOPLE/JULLISS/JULIA LISS](#), Daily Staff Reporter  
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A University professor has discovered a way to use an imagined sense of smell to enhance advertisements for food.

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Business Prof. Aradhna Krishna has made progress in her research on sensory marketing strategies, a field that she defined as “marketing that engages consumers’ senses and affects peoples’ behavior using subconscious triggers.”

Krishna is the director of the Sensory Marketing Lab at the Ross School of Business. Research at the lab aims to show that olfactory imagery can be used to improve the efficacy of certain advertisements when paired with strong visual images.

Temple University Professor Maureen Morrin, who worked on Krishna’s team, said the research could increase the effectiveness of ads. However, the research is currently in such early phases that companies are not yet incorporating the findings to attract customers.

“We would love it if advertisers took notice and started incorporating a call to the consumer to imagine the odor of their products,” Morrin said.

Olfactory imagery, or “smellizing” as Krishna and her team call it, allows consumers to imagine a smell that they are not actually experiencing, much like visualizing something you are not looking at. Krishna said the existence of olfactory imagery has been a matter of controversy within the academic community for a long time, but now there is more certainty of its existence.

Researchers ran fMRI studies to see which parts of the brain are active when smelling an actual scent compared with smellizing. Results show that the brain activity is identical in both scenarios, which researchers claim is olfactory imagery at work.

To further their understanding of the phenomenon, Krishna’s lab tested whether people found hand warmers and coolers more effective if they had a congruent warm or cold smell injected into them. They found that hand warmers with warm smells like pumpkin spice were more effective than ones impregnated with a smell like sea-island cotton.



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