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Smellizing, the in-thing in print advertising

Headlines that let you imagine a smell of a food product



What smells so good? Smellizing, which can be used effectively in print advertising, is when a consumer is prompted to imagine the smell of a product and feels tempted to buy it. The effects of smellizing include salivation, desire and actual food consumption. Photo: Ramesh Sharma

Forget seeing, imagining a smell can better drive consumers' desire to purchase advertised food products.

Called smellizing — a new term for prompting consumers to imagine the smell of a product — it could be the next step toward more effective advertising.

“Before we started this project, we looked for print ads that asked consumers to imagine the smell of the product, and we found none. We think it’s because advertisers do not think it would actually do anything,” explained professor Maureen Morrin of Temple University’s Fox School of Business in Pennsylvania.

Researchers found that imagining a smell increased desire to consume and purchase advertised products.

The consumers’ response was measured over several studies that looked at the effect of smellizing on salivation, desire and actual food consumption.

The researchers found that imagining what a tasty food smells like increases these types of responses only when the consumer also sees a picture of the advertised product.

Prompts

Participants who looked at print advertisements were prompted by questions such as: Fancy a freshly baked cookie? Feel like a chocolate cake? and Feel like a freshly baked cookie? Look for these in a store near you.

Morrin found that these types of headlines had a positive impact on desire to consume the product, if they were accompanied by a call to also imagine the smell of the food.

Seeing and smelling

This positive impact was strongest when the image of the product could be seen at the same time study participants imagined the smell.

Individuals can discriminate among thousands of different odours and are reasonably good at detecting odours they have smelled before, they are quite poor at identifying the odours they smell, noted the study.

That is, individuals often have difficulty stating just what it is they happen to be smelling at any particular moment, unless they can see the odour referent.

This may be why a picture is so important in activating the effects of smellizing, said the study appeared in the Journal of Consumer Research. IANS

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