

Go

Beauty Packaging | Coatings World | Contract Pharma | HAPPI

Ink World | Label & Narrow Web Medical Product Outsourcing | Nonwovens Industry

Nutraceuticals World | Orthopedic Design & Technology | Pharma & Bio Ingredients

Rodman Publications Online:

Home

Current Issue

Table of Contents

Editors Page

Breaking News

Meetings/Events

Ad Index

Formulary

New Packages

New Products

Patent Review

Personnel Round Up

The Grayson Report

Supplier's Corner

Formulary Archives

Webguide

Company Websites

Professional

Resources

Classified Ads

Article Archive

Personal Care

Cybrary®

Webinars

Subscription Services

Annual Features

Buyers Guide

Beauty I/O

Literature Showcase

Corporate Profiles

Happi Latin America

Contract

Manufacturing /

Private Label



The Silent Persuader

Fragrance moves consumers toward purchasing household products.

Melissa Meisel
Associate Editor

Watch a consumer in a store aisle. She will either put a household product immediately in the cart or she will stop, compare labels, prices, and then smell the selections.

The fragrance of a household product nearly always plays a very large role in its marketability, according to Dr. Achille Riviello, perfumer, household applications, Drom Fragrances International, Germany, either to influence decisions at the point of purchase or lead to a repeat purchase.

Sales of household cleaners totaled \$1.6 billion in U.S. supermarkets, drugstores and mass merchandisers excluding Wal-Mart, according to Information Resources, Inc. (IRI) for the year ended Oct. 7, 2007. Throw in laundry detergent and sales jump to \$5.1 billion. So, what is it about fragrance that plays a part in moving these products?

Sway to Pay

"In today's market, efficacy is a given," notes Debbie Nencheck, vice president of marketing, fragrances at Takasago International, Rockleigh, NJ. "Fragrance is the key point of difference that allows consumers to make choices based on personal preferences from an ever-growing selection of scent choices. It's the silent persuader that aids in consumer differentiation to support product promises and benefits."

"When it comes to household products, fragrance is absolutely a part of the selection process. When you work hard to clean your house, the fragrance says 'job well done.' It's your reward and it's a signal to your guests that your home is clean," says Michelle Harper, director of fragrance evaluation at Arylessence, Marietta, GA. "With modern, busy lifestyles, fragrance plays an even more important role than ever before. There may be less time to clean house, but people still want their guests to walk in and think clean."

Mei Xu, a fragrance expert at Chesapeake Bay Candle Company, Rockville, MD, who created room sprays in exotic scents such as tealeaf & papaya and jasmine & juniper, notes that current health trends also play a part in scent selections. "Aromatherapy is a very popular concept today. Consumers do select home fragrances based on the effects the scents may have on their health. For example, lavender and vanilla are known for their calming influences and grapefruit is known for its reviving, uplifting effects," Ms. Xu tells Happi.

Some companies use their own staff as the best test market for choosing what fragrances will be the next big thing. For instance, Séverine Mathé, product development director for Fruits & Passion, a home care company based in Candiac, Quebec, tells Happi, "We don't decide on a particular fragrance in a pre-determined fashion. We brief our perfumers to guide them on what we are looking for, but we give them a lot of creative freedom."

Ms. Mathé cites as an example the company's Cucina orange sanguinelli & fennel kitchen spray. "After we launched the lime zest & cypress fragrance, we weren't planning on launching another citrus-based fragrance within a year's time. However, when we smelled the orange sanguinelli & fennel fragrance (launched in 2007), we instantly loved it since it was a new interpretation of an orange fragrance, which we hadn't smelled before. Rather than smelling the zest of the fruit, you could smell the pulp, its more 'juicy' side. The fennel adds a light 'green' touch, which blends perfectly with the orange.

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Naturals still lead the way.



"Basically, we go with our instincts and whether we 'fall in love' with a fragrance, while keeping in mind that we want all the Cucina fragrances to complement each other."

The other fragrances in Cucina's home care collection include coriander & olive tree, fig & fresh herbs, zucchini flower & truffles and ginger & Sicilian lemon.

In the Wash

One category that is especially influenced by fragrance is laundry products, according to Allison Yang, fabric care external relations manager, Procter & Gamble, Cincinnati, OH. She tells Happi: "We've seen in fabric care that scent is very important to many consumers. That may mean that they are drawn to a product with no scent or a light scent for sensitive skin, or a stronger, bold scent to indulge in."

Ms. Yang also notes that some consumers also want different scents for different loads—meaning that they have several different laundry detergents and fabric softeners at hand to do the job. "For example, some people may wash their everyday clothes in our Pure Essentials line, their linens in our Simple Pleasures line and their exercise clothes in our Febreze line," says Ms. Yang.

Pure Essentials is one of the latest P&G additions to the Bounce, Downy and Tide collections. Touted as "naturally-inspired scents that moms will love," both the Bounce dryer sheets and Downy fabric softeners are available in scent variants of aloe and white lilac or chamomile and lemon verbena; Tide detergents are offered with baking soda and a white lilac scent or with citrus extracts and lemon verbena.

The products in the Pure Essentials line complement each other, as it is common that consumers want the same scents across their laundry detergents and fabric enhancers, according to the P&G fabric care external relations manager. Ms. Yang notes that due to this demand over the past two years, her company coordinated the Tide, Downy and Bounce lines to "enhance the overall scent experiences in fabrics."

On-Trend Scents

Fragrance is a basic component of a household product, but the palette which to choose from has expanded over the years to suit a variety of different preferences.

According to Ms. Nencheck at Takasago, fragrances for home care continue to be influenced by clean, fresh and natural impressions. She notes, "From crisp citrus in cleaners to an assortment of fruits and florals in liquid dish soap to the growing complexity and fantasy escapism in fabric care—fragrances provide a distinctive message to communicate caring and create a welcoming home environment."

Wendy Warus, marketing director, home care for Henkel, Inc., Scottsdale, AZ, agrees. "In household cleaners, fragrances that denote clean are always popular," she tells Happi. Henkel recently launched its Purex Natural Elements line with three "naturally fresh-inspired" scents. According to the company, in developing the new line infused with natural fragrance extracts, Purex anticipated upcoming fragrance trends to give consumers a laundry product that is pleasing to smell. The Purex Natural Elements collection features trademarked combinations of linen & lilies, apple & melon and cherry blossoms & vanilla.

Laundry care selection is greatly influenced by fragrance.



"We have analyzed the 'scent of clean' and the consumer's expectations when they think of 'clean'—remember, these messages and expectations can be subliminal, connecting to emotion and memory," notes Karen Mack, a senior evaluator of applied research and new technology at Arylessence. "The modern 'scent of clean' is communicated through fresh citrus, complex citrus accords, floral ozone, fresh florals, crisp fruits and sheer orientals.

Ms. Mack also points to the classics as leaders in the fragrance forum. "Pine and lemon are the longest standing fragrance variants in household products. They have been around for a very long time and continue to be strong performers today. Their popularity links to their efficacy," she says.

She notes that pine terpenes are strong degreasers and this links the sense of smell to function. "The fact that pine oil was used as the germ killing active in many of the original EPA registered disinfectants leads to people associating this heritage smell with successful cleaning. The smell of pine is certainly a signal of clean," says Ms. Mack.

Lemon oil has been used to dust and condition wood furniture since ancient times, and according to Ms. Mack, "People still associate the smell of Lemon Pledge with clean today." The clean citrus character of lemon easily found its way into dish detergents in the early 1980's, says the senior evaluator for Arylessence. Colgate

New for 2008 is a combination of Mr. Clean and Febreze products.



Palmolive's Ajax and Lever Brothers' Sunlight added label claims indicating they contained real lemon juice.

"Citrus terpenes are also excellent degreasers and dishwashing liquid advertising told consumers' that the added lemon juice meant grease cutting," says Ms. Mack. "Lemon fragrance also signals efficacy to consumers. Apple is another important consideration for conveying clean and fresh messages."

Modern Combinations

Mike Kinsey, section head household care fragrance development, P&G, notes that while still a popular scent in household products, over the past couple of years, fragrances that consumers perceive as clean and fresh have evolved beyond citrus and into broader trend-related categories.

One recent example is the launch of new scents consistent with the emerging "comfort" trend, says Mr. Kinsey. Notes such as lavender and vanilla were utilized across several P&G household brands (Tide, Downy, Febreze) with a positive consumer response.

A second example of the evolution of fragrances in household care is the rise of scents with a nature/natural category, says Mr. Kinsey. "As we saw with the success of scents like Febreze's Meadows & Rain as well as Tide Pure Essentials, the connection between fragrances associated with the outdoors and consumer perception of cleaning/freshness is very logical," he tells Happi.

Method's grapefruit spray.



The Mr. Clean brand has taken the scent experience to another level by offering "a new freshness benefit with their tough cleaning products," says Mr. Kinsey. At press time, P&G was readying its launch of Mr. Clean's liquid, spray and Magic Eraser products with Febreze Lavender & Vanilla Comfort and Meadows & Rain. "The very positive consumer feedback on these two perfumes has confirmed our belief that consumers appreciate new, trend-driven scents in traditional cleaning products," says Mr. Kinsey.

P&G also recently rolled out the Dawn Simple Pleasures line, the first dish care product to combine the dish liquid with an air freshener in one dual-compartment bottle.. Attached to the base of the bottle, the room-filling scent is activated by releasing a tab on the bottom. Dawn Simple Pleasures is available in three scents: Water Lily & Jasmine, Apple & Pear and Lemon & Tangerine.

Clean and Green

Amongst the most important trends for 2008 and beyond is the theme of eco/green, notes Ms. Nencheck of Takasago, as more products assuage consumer environmental concerns. "Fragrances will need to be created that sustain this positioning," says Ms. Nencheck. "Fragrances must support the claims of eco/green while still delivering expected performance in use at a competitive price."

"Our world continues to change and many consumer product companies that focus on personal care, home fragrance and cleaning products are trying to fill demand with 'greener' products," says Alan S. Brown, vice president of essential oil supplier The Lebermuth Co., Inc. "This does not necessarily mean natural or certified organic; however, the trend has and continues to lead companies toward natural, sustainable and in some cases organic flavor and fragrance concepts."

Mr. Brown tells Happi that a recently successful "green" development at Lebermuth has been mainstream natural and organic fragrances for personal care. Some examples include pomegranate, violet cedar wood, melons and citrus, vanilla, mint and raspberry lemonade fragrances.

One of the eco-friendly home care lines leading the green arena is Method of San Francisco, CA. "At Method, our fragrances are inspired by nature and we are continuously developing trend forward, innovative fragrances that support our strategy," Suzanne McCormick, director of fragrance development at Method, tells Happi. "We want to offer newness to our consumers by combining a familiar ingredient with an unexpected twist—for example, our recent addition of a ginger yuzu scent to our hand wash collection."

"Fragrances that have performed well are those that are unexpected in typical household products," Ms. McCor- mick adds. "For example, ylang ylang in our daily shower spray, sweetwater in laundry- detergent and French lavender in dish soap. Consumers are used to seeing typical scents like lemon or pine in household cleaning products so offering a fresh scent like grapefruit or cucumber excites a customer."

Exotic, spicy scents are the next big thing in household cleaning products.



Smaller, independent marketers are also catching the rush of today's fresh scents. Debbie Ludington, owner of Greenland, NH's Sweet Grass Farm who created the naturally derived Farmhouse Homecare collection, concurs that the biggest consumer draw is the quality of a fragrance.

"We find that customers love true-to-nature or nature duplicates compared to 'fantasy' fragrance combinations. Our customers want to experience the fragrances that they smell in nature."

Sweet Grass Farm's top home fragrance launch for 2007 was its Farmhouse lemon verbena home care category, available in a non-phosphate laundry powder, fabric softener, room spray, dish soap and furniture wax. "Our lemon verbena has been very well received. It is a very natural fragrance with a perfect combination of bright lemon balanced with woody, green verbena notes," says Ms. Ludington. The Farmhouse Collection is also available in lavender and fresh white lilac varieties.

A Fragrant Future

On the whole, the Earth just may be the home care market's biggest inspiration, according to Ms. Warus of Henkel. "With the green/organics trend gaining momentum, 2008 launches will be clean, nature-based fragrances such as green teas, blue waters, and fresh fruits and floral blends." Ms. Warus also predicts that beyond 2008, globalization and experimentation trends will have a stronger influence, so more exotic, oriental fragrances will be available in product ranges.

"Watch for an increase in fragrances containing fennel—a deep, exotic spice," says Ms. Harper of Arylessence. "This note can enhance more typical fragrance types and set them apart from the mundane."

But assorted global scent selections aside, it all goes back to the localized market in ultimately deciding the next scent roster for a product line, according to Mr. Kinsey of P&G: "Given the number of choices consumers have today, it is critical to deliver scents that consumers love throughout the decision, purchase and in-home use process."