

# Mastering Using the Five Senses in Retail

Contrary to popular belief, shoppers including young millennials, are more likely to make many of their purchases in store. It's true! Think of it this way, people are constantly on their mobile devices and desktop PCs for long periods of time throughout the day for work, socializing, etc. Time away from being virtually connected means time for themselves and their family to connect in real life. People may research a product online, but oftentimes the practice of physically going to a store to make the purchase is more common than once thought. *Going shopping* has even become a family affair where parents and children can share new experiences just by visiting a store together.

Online purchases cannot engage all of the five senses. No matter what you do, you are still dealing with a flat screen. All humans crave interaction. By stimulating the senses, you create excitement and desire and a longing for more. When all the senses are employed, that's when the magic happens. Here's a run-down of how you can ignite people's senses to lead them toward a purchase:

## ***Scents & Sensibility***

1. **SMELL** – This sense is pure emotion and can conjure up happy times. Do you sell incense, candles or room spritz/air fresheners? Test out some of the more popular fragrances in your store. Be careful to not overpower or over-mix scents, as it can be a huge turn-off to those with a discriminating nose. Use a lighter and more universally-appealing choice like fresh linen, rain, vanilla or orange. Citrus scents such as lemon/lime, grapefruit, or a fusion such as cucumber melon can have a soft, energizing effect. Be sure to steer clear of heavy, unpleasant scents such as musks and patchouli. Of course, aromas such as pumpkin, apple pie, pine, cinnamon and peppermint are expected in season, and can have an uplifting, as well as nostalgic effect.
2. **TASTE** – This can be a little tougher to tackle if you wouldn't normally have food and/or drinks out in the open. A monthly taste-testing could be just the push you need to get people in your store who normally may not visit. A "Shop Local" campaign could kick-start business for you and others in your vicinity. Is there a bakery down the street? A juice bar or coffee shop next door? Get to know your neighbors and collaborate on an event. On the simpler side, a random bowl of hard candy with popular flavors can be subtle enough for a feel-good memory to be triggered. This can often lead to an impulse buy. Encourage people to sample whatever you put out and offer their comments. Connecting with people on an individual level makes them more likely to purchase an item. Someone who listens to them and is interacting with them in a non-threatening or overly salesy way often seals the deal even further.
3. **SIGHT** – What's the first thing a customer sees when they walk in the door? Wait, it starts before that. What do they see outside the door that makes them walk in? This is where visual merchandising is key in a two-part system. Your front door/display window needs to intrigue, while the first steps should invite. Once they are in the door, offer a clear view in an open-store layout, peppered with eye-catching displays and impactful signs or banners. Experiment with some proven-winners such as FITKICKS or Two Left Feet. These prominent and colorfully-filled floor displays give an area life with minimal effort. Clean lines in a clean space. And what cannot

be stressed enough is cleanliness – no one wants to enter a space that is over-cluttered, messy or downright dirty.

4. **TOUCH** – This is the best of all the senses for retail stores to take advantage of since it cannot be replicated online. People have a need to pick-up, feel, examine, etc., particularly clothing for themselves or as gifts. The Hello Mello, Jack & Missy and Britt's Knits lines are perfect examples of how the feel sells the item. The softness of the lounge wear, the luxurious sophisticated style of the wearables, and the incredible warmth of the accessories are best sold in-person. Chances are, not only will they pick up these items as gifts, but also to treat themselves. This is where upselling is encouraged and is often easiest.
5. **SOUND** – What would Christmastime be without Andy Williams, Nat King Cole, Mariah Carey and Michael Bublé? Soothing sounds or light background music help elevate the mood and get people into the groove of the season. Not just your patrons, but also your employees. The underlying hum should be that of joyousness, not annoyance. Who's ever walked down an aisle in a drugstore or general store and been blasted by a motion-activated toy or prop? Sometimes fun – mostly irritating. If you sell these, spread them throughout the store so customers are not bombarded with them all at once.

Don't miss out on profits because of misconceptions. As you've seen, there's plenty you can do to draw customers in, but how do they know you are doing so much to get noticed? They don't – you need to tell them. Whether it's a postcard campaign, window sign, flyers posted at local venues, online announcements, or however you choose to make your voice heard. Do it loud and proud!