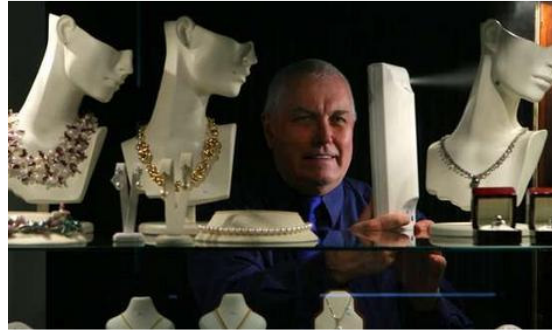


Conrad Walters
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"It's a feel-good thing" ... Stuart Reid, owner of a jewellery shop on George Street, has been using fragrance in his store for five years. Photo: Peter Morris

THE nose knows and, increasingly, it also buys. From luxury jewellers to fashion chains to coffee shops, retailers are pumping fragrances into their stores to lure customers inside.

The strategy has long been popular in Europe and the United States - one American bank reportedly sprays the smell of dollar bills into its branches - but Australian retailers are only just tapping into what has proven an effective addition to the marketer's armoury.

"It's not mainstream yet, certainly in Australia, but it's emerging," said Michael Morrison, a Monash University expert in marketing.

And it works. A marketing study by Swinburne University's Associate Professor Val Clulow found consumers in fragrant environments rated stores and merchandise more favourably.

"It's about shortening the perception of time," Mr Morrison said. "I might think I've been there five minutes, but I've been there 20."

Stuart Reid Jewellers on George Street has been using a floral fragrance for more than five years.

"It sure smells better than the exhaust downstairs," the owner, Stuart Reid, said. "If customers are going to sit in here for half an hour or an hour with us, I think it makes a difference. It's a feel-good thing."

Sydney's Ecomist, which supplies scents to the jewellery store, sells 180 different fragrances, including 55 that will be launched tomorrow at a retail trade fair in Melbourne.

"You could call us the Pied Piper of aromas," the national marketing manager for Ecomist, Mark Gordon, said. "We're leading people by the nose into shops."

He said Ecomist, which began 14 years ago when many people laughed at the concept, has more than 8000 customers, including Supre fashion stores, surfboard sellers and, not surprisingly, coffee shops.

"They don't always roast beans on site, so they like to have fragrance wafting out into malls," Mr Gordon said, adding Ecomist also uses the expertise of a French perfumer to make individual fragrances for businesses.

"If a selected fragrance is used within a store, customers will spend longer and will browse for longer periods of time and spend more," he said.

Mr Morrison said the science of scents could be used to match complex sets of demographics. "If you've got a young target market, maybe [aged] eight to 12, you'd probably put an aroma of citrus into that particular space because younger people like citrus. If you've got an older target market, you may well use vanilla," he said.

"Smell is the most evocative sense," Mr Gordon said. "Imagine if you smelt baby powder, where does that take you? That takes you back to your childhood. It takes you back to when you had children yourself."

And from there, it takes you to the cash register.