

What Is Next in Air Care Scent Trends?

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Aircare Fragrance developments have moved air care from the functional to the emotional, but what does that mean for future trends in scent?

Air Care No Longer a Cover Up

Not so long ago, the primary if not only function of air fresheners was to mask unpleasant odours, but clever marketing over the last decade has brought a complete change in consumer perceptions of the category's purpose.

As home care manufacturers came to recognise the competitive advantage of offering new and unusual fragrances in their ranges in order to drive sales, scent innovations brought about more experiential and complex fragrances, resulting in a shift in focus for the entire air care category.

Consumers no longer turn to air care products only when there are nasty smells to be removed or masked; they now buy into the category when they want to enhance the environment in their homes. A category that once could have been considered almost a commodity used only out of necessity has been subtly transformed into a category deeply connected to consumers' emotions.

What is popular now?

While lavender remains the favourite global fragrance in air care, current trends at the forefront of scent innovations in developed markets can broadly be divided into two categories: Firstly, there are clean fragrances with a strong link with nature and the environment; and secondly, there are more exotic, luxury scents.

The popularity of clean, natural scents, such as Glade's Spring Water and Fresh Mountain Morning fragrances, ties in closely with the wider movement towards more environmentally friendly and organic products that began as a trend in food products, before shifting over into personal care and cosmetics and toiletries, and then home care.

While some exotic scents, such as Air Wick's Wild Jasmine & Pearl, are simply a luxury twist on more traditional scents, other products' scents are difficult to work out from the product's name alone. SC Johnson's Moonlit Walk & Wandering Stream, available as a 2-in-1 candle, and Brazilian Carnival from the Febreze Destinations range are prime examples.

Emotions link the two trends

The common factor that links both current scent trends is that manufacturers are striving to make a connection with consumers by stirring emotional responses. Although there will always be a place for popular traditional scents, such as lavender, manufacturers are no longer limiting themselves to specific well-established and recognised fragrances.

While a product's scent must of course be pleasing to ensure repeat purchases, fragrances vary greatly as the product itself is sold primarily through its connection with experiences and sensations rather than any specific smell. Scents have broken free of former boundaries, and now almost anything is possible as a concept; Glade, for example, has a Relaxing Zen fragrance as part of its range.

Time to go local

A further trend that began in food products is the trend towards buying locally sourced products. Again, this could present an opportunity for air care manufacturers at the premium end of the spectrum in the form of country-specific fragrances, developing both seasonal and natural trends.

Country traditions or traditional foodstuffs could both be used as inspiration. Green tea, for example, is already a popular home care fragrance in markets in Asia Pacific. In the UK, for example, a Bramley Apple fragrance might find favour, particularly if backed by a British-themed marketing spin.

Harking back to the good old days

Evoking nostalgia for the past and the happiness of childhood, in particular, is a reliable tactic for marketers that has noticeably gained strength over the past decade, and one that could easily be introduced into home care fragrancing. The host of clean linen fragrances currently on the market is an indication that this type of positioning could catch on.

Since scents such as Hawaiian Aloha from Febreze offer escapism through the thought of holidays, it would only be a small jump in marketing to offer escapism through taking a trip back in time.

Analyst Insight by Ian Bell.

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