

Bringing Truth, Joy, and Eternity into the Classroom: Using Perfume to Teach Introductory Marketing.¹

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ABSTRACT: *This paper explains how to reinforce the teaching of basic marketing concepts through a simple group experiential exercise. After dividing the class into small groups, the exercise involves spraying perfume on students' wrists and instructing each group to develop a marketing plan that targets the segment of the market that they consider to best fit the perfume product. The paper clearly outlines how to prepare and run the exercise, some perfumes that the instructor might consider using, and what students will learn about marketing through the exercise. The paper concludes with some ideas on how to integrate our Christian faith into the learning experience.*

INTRODUCTION

Those of us who have been teaching for any length of time will be aware of the importance of capturing and holding students' attention in the classroom (Bain, 2004). Keeping students' attention, however, has become more difficult in an age of 30 second sound bites, online gaming, and chat rooms. As we move toward a post-literate world (Kelly, 1999), academics and publishers have been developing new ways of teaching traditional material so that the students' attention is captured and retained. Among the newer developments in pedagogy are a more formal use of Hollywood movies (Champoux, 2007), the use of interactive gaming in the classroom (Williams, 2007), experiential learning (Brown and Harvey, 2006), and management simulations (Management Simulations, 2007).

Having recognized that the traditional lecture format is becoming an increasingly redundant method of instruction

for post-modern students, the author has spent the last number of years exploring the effectiveness of a number of innovative pedagogical approaches. Some have worked well; others were less successful in terms of achieving learning outcomes. This paper introduces one of the author's more successful experiential exercises that involves spraying perfume on students' wrists and instructing the students to develop a marketing plan for the scent, focusing on the 4Ps of price, product, place, and promotion. The exercise is easy to set up, provides significant experiential learning of basic marketing concepts, and provides opportunities to raise issues of faith. It has also produced highly positive student evaluations. Many students are familiar with Donald Trump's *The Apprentice* and students have commented that they see the exercise like a mini *Apprentice*.² Many students describe it as "fun and exciting."³ One student noted that the author was "by far the most interesting teacher (he had) ever known. He does some crazy things to keep our atten-

tion, but that is what makes his classes so fun and interesting.”⁴ Another student commented that the perfume exercises were such a good way to learn and recommended that the author be paid \$150,000 per semester to keep him at the college.⁴ So far the administration appears not to have followed this advice!

The remainder of this paper is divided into six main parts. The first part outlines the learning objectives of the exercise. The next part focuses on the necessary preparation for the exercise and outlines the briefing instructions that need to be given to students. Part three explains how to run the exercise successfully in the classroom. Part four highlights the marketing concepts that students will learn through the exercise. Part five identifies some ways that the exercise can be used as a springboard to discuss issues of faith both within and outside the classroom. In the final part, some concluding comments are offered.

PART ONE: LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The exercise is designed to be conducted at an early stage in an introductory marketing course. Most introductory marketing texts follow a very similar unfolding of content (Boone and Kurtz, 2006; Kerin, Hartley and Rudelius, 2007; Hiam and Rastelli, 2007). Given these similarities it is recommended that the exercise be introduced about a third of the way through any introductory marketing course regardless of the particular textbook that the instructor has adopted. By this stage, students typically will have been introduced to varying definitions of marketing, the basic concepts of marketing planning, Porter's Five Forces (Porter, 1979), SWOT Analysis, market segmentation, target marketing, the marketing mix, and consumer behavior. While these early marketing classes often focus on what Bloom (1956) identifies as the *knowledge* cognitive domain, this exercise is more concerned with assessing the students' *comprehension and application* of marketing knowledge. This move from lecture to creative exercise helps create the type of diverse learning experience so highly praised by Bain (2004).

Learning Objectives

The primary objectives of the exercise are to:

- Assess the students' comprehension of the elements of the marketing mix and how these elements are interrelated.
- Evaluate the students' ability to use secondary data (NAICS Codes) to analyze a given industry (in this case, perfume).

- Assess the degree to which students can effectively apply the elements of the marketing mix to develop a consistent marketing plan for their given scent.
- Assess the students' ability to make an effective and professional classroom presentation.

Secondary objectives include introducing the students to the concepts of branding, semiotics, intellectual property, and international business. The skilled instructor will also be able to use the exercise to help students reflect on the consistency of their own faith, the importance of character in business, and the important role that branding and advertising often play in the construction of our identity. In doing so students (and instructors) often realize that they conform to patterns of this world far more than they might have realized (Romans 12:2).

PART TWO: BACKGROUND AND PREPARATION

Collecting Perfume Samples

Before the exercise can be conducted, the instructor will need to collect samples of perfume products such as perfumes, eau de toilettes, colognes, aftershaves, and/or body sprays. Some might typically be found in the instructor's home. Other products can be borrowed from family and friends. Finally, local department stores and perfumeries are generally quite willing to donate small samples once the nature of the exercise has been explained. Some might even ask the instructor to provide feedback after the exercise has been completed!

The exercise is more interesting if the instructor is able to collect samples that target different segments of the perfume market. There are a number of useful Web sites and blogs such as *Perfume Smellin' Things*, *Perfume Critic.Com*, *Now Smell This*, and *ScentBloggers* that the instructor might wish to consult to better understand the market segmentation of perfume products. Table 1 identifies some of these market segments along with representative perfumes that the instructor may wish to consider using. Table 1 also highlights some reasons why these particular scents enrich the classroom experience.

The instructor will need to collect one less perfume sample than the number of student groups in the class. Thus, if the class is divided into seven groups then the instructor will need six perfume samples. This is because one perfume will be applied to two different groups so that similarities and differences in marketing plans can be discussed in the classroom. Very often, the groups will come up with completely different marketing plans for the same perfume. Frequently, groups place the same scent perfume

in different market segments. A particularly good scent to use for this is *Vera Wang for Men*. Students often struggle to decide whether this perfume is designed for men or

women. Some groups conclude that it is a women's perfume. It is easy to imagine their surprise when they discover that it is in fact marketed to men!

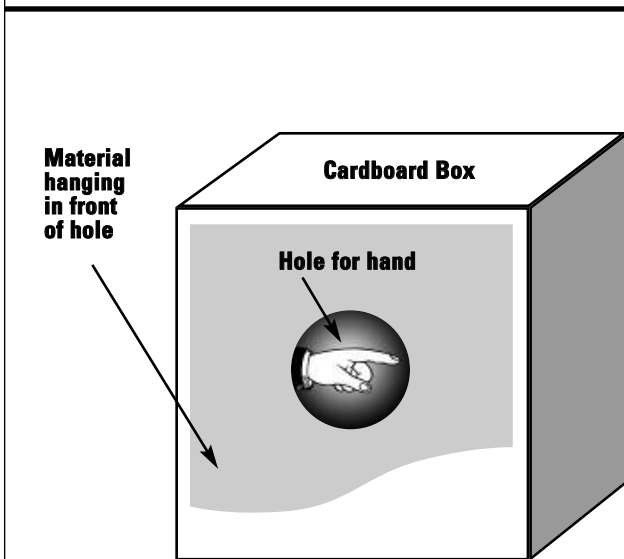
Table 1: Market Segments, Perfumes and How They Enhance the Classroom Experience

Segment	Perfume	Why this scent is interesting
Kids	Disney Collections	Generally students think these scents smell “disgusting” and either put them in mature woman's market, or among cheap supermarket brands. Some wonder if it is a cleaning product. So far only one group has ever placed it correctly as a kids' perfume
Teenage Girls	Tommy Girl Summer Splash by Tommy Hilfiger	<i>Tommy Girl</i> is quite a familiar scent for many female students, but Tommy Girl Summer Splash is much less well-known. Occasionally mistaken for a kids perfume to the chagrin of students who wear <i>Tommy Girl</i> !
Men's	Ozone by Sergio Tacchini	Students find this one tricky too. Generally they identify the correct segment, but the students' pricing strategies vary enormously.
Men's	Vera Wang for Men	Often mistaken for a woman's perfume!
Women's	Choose both a well known women's brand and also a cheaper imitation.	For one group you might spray the original scent but for another the cheaper imitation (available from Signature Scents and Make Up Madness). Generally, both groups market the scent in high price brackets. Despite the fact that many women cannot distinguish between the scents when they are initially applied, women nonetheless report that they would still prefer to receive the higher-priced brand. This raises important issues about the importance of advertising and how we are more shaped by our culture than we might care to admit.
Unisex	Eau de Cartier by Cartier	Unisex scents are still quite rare in the United States, so students tend to be less aware of this segment. The author tries to bring one over from Europe so that the students will not be familiar with it. Using a unisex scent helps students recognize that products may vary from one geographical region to another due to different cultures and concepts about gender identity.
Women's Daytime Perfume	Pacific Paradise by Escada	Marketed as a perfume for daytime, rather than evening wear. Many students do not recognize that some perfumes are designed to be worn at different times of the day, thus creating different sub-segments.
Special interest groups – e.g. Skateboarders	Vurt by PacSun	Vurt is targeted at male teenage skateboarders. Using this or other colognes targeted at these smaller segments helps students to understand different ways of behaviorally segmenting the market.
Air freshener	Fabreze Summer & Splash Proctor and Gamble	The author often sprays Fabreze on one group. This is to help students realize that perfume is also used in soap, detergents, and air fresheners, etc. Students often mistake the scent of Fabreze for a well-balanced high-priced women's perfume and suggest a retail price of \$50-\$70.

Preparing the Props

Next, the instructor will need to find a fairly large cardboard box. If one is not readily available in the college they can typically be collected from local grocery stores. In the bottom of the box the instructor will need to cut a hole large enough for a man to put his hand through. Finally, some material is attached to the box so that it drapes over the hole preventing students from seeing the perfume as it is sprayed onto their wrists. Figure 1 illustrates how the finished box will look.

Figure 1: Preparing the Cardboard Box



Briefing the Students

The exercise works better if the instructor tells the class not to apply perfume, aftershave, or strong scents (including very highly scented hair products) on the day that the exercise will be conducted in the classroom. In addition, the class should also be asked if any students are allergic to perfume products. If so, the instructor can spray the scent on a perfume sample card, similar to those used in perfumeries, rather than on the student's skin. Occasionally other students will ask to have the perfume sprayed on a sample card rather than on their wrists. It is recommended that you allow this but explain that it may change the scent of the perfume product considerably. By giving this degree of flexibility, all students can still participate in the exercise and avoid having any student covered in an allergic rash!

PART THREE: RUNNING THE EXERCISE IN THE CLASSROOM

Dividing the Class into Groups

At the beginning of the class period the instructor divides the class into small groups of between five and nine students. The exercise works better if there are both men and women in each group because the same perfume can often smell quite different on men's and women's skin. One-by-one, each group is invited to the front of the classroom and perfume is applied to each member's wrist as they place their hand behind the cloth and through the hole in the box.

The Assignment

Figure 2 outlines the assignment to be given to students after the perfume has been sprayed on each student.

Figure 2: Student Assignment Handout

1. You will need to consult the *www.census.gov* Web site and the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) section to examine the perfume industry. Type in "Perfume" in the search box and prepare an analysis of the perfume industry.
2. Identify the segment of the perfume market that you will target. Explain your reasons for selecting this segment.
3. In which state will you manufacture your scent? Explain your reasons for selecting this location.
4. Where will you market your scent to effectively reach your target market? Why did you choose these locations?
5. What name, image, packaging, pricing, and promotion strategies have you developed to make the product appealing to the target market? Explain the reasons for your choices.
6. Prepare a 10-minute class presentation justifying your use of the marketing mix to target your selected segment.

After the perfume has been sprayed on each group, the instructor should distribute the assignment and allow students to begin working on their marketing plans during the remainder of the class period. This is important because the aroma of perfume lasts only a few hours, so

the class period provides the best (and perhaps only opportunity) for the group to appreciate and discuss the scent.

At this point it is interesting and helpful if the instructor can explain how perfume is produced. The art of the perfumer is not simple. Perfumers must select their ingredients, decide how essential oils are to be extracted and then blend these ingredients so that the required aromatic notes are created and balanced. Central to the art of the perfumer is the knowledge of the time that it takes for various scents and oils to evaporate. This knowledge is used to structure perfume into three notes: top, middle and bass (Filby, 1998).

The three notes need to be balanced in such a way that middle and bass notes pick up and reinforce the aromatic themes introduced by the top note. The rate at which notes evaporate is dependent on many factors including the quality of the perfume, whether it is alcohol or oil based, the air temperature and skin type on which it is applied. This movement from one note to another may have some bearing on the exercise and students should be encouraged to smell the perfume regularly to see if they can detect these subtle changes in aroma throughout the day. Students are often quite surprised at how unpleasant the bass notes of some perfumes smell once the more appealing top and middle notes have worn off. This realization will be discussed later in the paper during the discussion of faith integration.

The instructor should not be surprised if students try to guess the brand of their perfume. While this adds to the enjoyment of the exercise, it is important that the instructor neither confirms nor denies these suspicions. In the author's own classroom experience no student has so far correctly identified the perfume and many are often very wide of the mark. For example, one girl was convinced that she knew the brand of the perfume that was sprayed on her. She was so insistent that her group followed her advice and targeted the perfume at the higher priced end of the young-to-middle-aged professional women's segment (retailing at \$50 for a small bottle). While her group made a compelling presentation and did very well in terms of the assignment, she was surprised and mildly embarrassed when the author revealed that the actual scent was *Fabreze Summer & Splash* air freshener!

Student Presentations

The student presentations should be scheduled about three weeks after the initial classroom exercise. This gives students enough time to think about the issues and plan their presentations without allowing too much time to elapse between the initial classroom exercise and the final

student presentations. The students' presentations tend to be very compelling. Some students develop quite sophisticated multi-media advertisements for their product. Others have done research on perfume wholesalers, bottlers and costs of packaging. One group of students ran around campus doing an impromptu market survey to gauge their peers' reactions to their scent and then built this data into their marketing plan. While we should be pleased that our students can make such good presentations, it is important not to lose sight of the fact that the purpose of the assignment is to see how convincingly they can develop a marketing plan to capture their target market.

PART FOUR: WHAT STUDENTS SHOULD LEARN

The Interrelationship of the four Ps of Marketing

After each group has presented, the instructor should reveal the actual perfume used. Sometimes the group identified the same segment the product actually targets; at other times they opt to market to a completely different segment. While students will celebrate if they identify the perfume's actual market segment, it is important to remind them that this is not the aim of the exercise. Rather, it is to assess how well they can develop a coherent and believable market plan.

What the students will learn is the interdependence between price, place, product, and promotion. The exercise will also reinforce the importance of market segmentation, target marketing, and how the four Ps need to be changed when a company targets different segments. The author has not found a better exercise for making this point.

Market Research Using the North American Industry Classification System

All too often marketing students lack the ability to analyze an industry. This exercise (and subsequent debriefing) helps students identify the rich secondary data available in the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS). Even though students are initially unfamiliar with the NAICS, those who are prepared to spend some time exploring and analyzing the NAICS Web site can gain important insight into the perfume market. For example, students will learn how to find common industry definitions on the NAICS Web site where the U.S. Census Bureau defines NAICS 325620: Toilet Preparation Manufacturing as "establishments primarily engaged in preparation, blending, compounding, and packaging toilet preparations, such as perfumes, shaving preparations, hair preparations, face creams, lotions (including sunscreens), and other cosmetic preparations."

Students will also find that that NAICS identifies three other perfume related industries, namely the: Perfume Material Manufacturing (325199), Perfume Stores (446120), and the Perfume Merchant Wholesalers (424210). Students will also be able to use NAICS data to see how these industries are geographically located throughout the United States. For example, in 1997 (the most recent) using the U.S. Census Bureau's Industry Statistics Sampler — NAICS 446120: cosmetics, beauty supplies, and perfume stores — it is interesting to note that California accounted for 1,117 of the 9,014 cosmetic, beauty supplies, and perfume stores in the United States and accounted for the largest total sales by state. In contrast, the Industry Statistics Sampler — NAICS 325620: toilet preparation manufacturing — reveals that the state with by far the largest perfume production was New Jersey on the opposite coast. Better students will recognize that this geographic distribution is likely to mean that there is an important role for wholesalers in the industry.

Semiotic Analysis

Perfume advertisements are a wonderful tool for introducing semiotic analysis to marketing students, helping them to understand how perfume becomes a sign for sophistication, success, romance, rebellion, masculinity, femininity, etc. From a Christian perspective, of course, many of these aspirations have become idols in contemporary society.

The Importance of Branding, Advertising

Most students are unable to distinguish between branded perfume and cheaper copies that are available from a number of sources such as Signature Scents and Make Up Madness. Nevertheless, they almost universally prefer to own the more expensive branded product. This realization helps students understand the importance of branding and how advertising can add value to a product. There can be no doubt that an important part of the consumer's pleasure in wearing a perfume is derived through identifying with the images and values that the perfume promotes.

Intellectual Property

The existence of similar copycat perfumes resulted in L'Oreal filing a lawsuit against Bellure, a Dubai-based perfume company, for producing and selling nearly identical copies of some of L'Oreal's most famous perfumes such as Emporio Armani and Anaïs Anaïs. The officiating court, The Tribunal de Grande Instance de Paris, concluded that:

a fragrance is the result of an intellectual research of a composer which appeals to his accumulated imagination and knowledge to create an original bouquet of odorous products chosen for an aesthetic goal and thus constituting a work of the mind (McDermott, Will & Emory 2006).

Thus, even though Bellure could not be sued on the grounds of trade mark infringement because both the packaging and name that Bellure gave to its perfumes differed significantly from those used by L'Oreal, by finding that perfume is a work of art, the court held that Bellure infringed the copyright of the olfactory architecture of the perfume and was ordered to pay L'Oreal \$1.48 million in damages (McDermott, Will & Emery, 2006). It is interesting to note that it is the actual copying of the olfactory architecture that is illegal; a case that L'Oreal filed in London against a company claiming that its cheap copycat perfume smelled like one of L'Oreal's products was dismissed by the judge (Independent, 2006). In the French case, L'Oreal initially lost the case but on appeal provided a chromatographic analysis of the constituent smells of one of the copycat perfumes showing that 50 out of the 52 elements of the copycat perfume were identical to the L'Oreal perfume. Lancôme successfully won a similar case in the Netherlands (Nurton, 2006), and the likelihood is that these findings will have implications for many countries (McDermott, Will & Emery, 2006).

International Business

The perfume industry affords great opportunities to introduce students to different aspects of international business. For example, the French perfume region centered on Grasse provides a good example of a regional cluster that has developed an international competitive advantage (Porter, 1990; Ramanantsoa, 2005). The relationship between national and corporate identities is well explored by Puig (2003) in her analysis of the internationalization of the Spanish Perfume industry. Other research examines the successes and failures of multinational perfume companies attempting to break into new international markets such as China and India (Peter, 2004).

PART FIVE: USING THE EXERCISE TO DISCUSS FAITH

This exercise offers a number of opportunities to discuss faith both within and outside the classroom. The author has used all of these on different occasions, although there is generally not the time available to discuss them all in a classroom environment. On some occasions students have

been willing to enter into discussion of these issues. However, as the author's marketing classes have gotten larger (now averaging 70 students, including students from both Christian and non-Christian backgrounds), the points are now more frequently made as lecture points and discussed after class with individuals or small groups of students as opportunities arise.

Do Not Be Conformed To The World

Many students will be surprised at how much advertising has influenced their choices in perfume selection. Perfume manufacturers use advertising to link particular scents with images of success, love, romance, popularity, sophistication, femininity, and masculinity. Some of the images portrayed are neither biblical nor wholesome. As Christians, we are exhorted not to be conformed to the pattern of the world (Romans 12:2), yet we are too often unaware of the powerful ways in which our culture shapes us. Semiotic analysis can help students become more aware of ways in which we are shaped by contemporary culture and how concepts such as success, love, and popularity can become idols replacing the centrality of God in our lives.

Living a consistent Christian Life

One of the main differences between quality perfumes and cheaper copies are the quality of their bass notes. Many cheaper perfumes have pleasant top and middle notes, but rather unpleasant bass notes. Until the end of the day, however, the differences between the genuine and copy are not easy to distinguish. However, as the perfumes' bass notes appear one product may give off a pleasant aroma while the other can be downright unpleasant.

Similarly, some students in a Christian College are quite adept at presenting a good Christian image to the outside world, but remain essentially unconverted in their hearts. This perfume metaphor can be used to press home the point that our conversion needs to be as real in our private lives (our bass notes) as we present it to be to the outside world (our top and middle notes). Like all metaphors, the use of perfume in this way cannot be pushed too far. Nevertheless, the author has found it very effective in making this point, especially when it is made while the classroom is still full of aromatic perfumes.

Being the Aroma of Christ

2 Corinthians 2:15 tells us that we are the aroma of Christ to those who are perishing and those who are being saved. The instructor can challenge his or her students to make sure that they live their lives in such a way that this aroma can be experienced by all. In addition, the instruc-

tor can also take the opportunity to remind students that their primary witness in the workplace is the quality of their work. Being active in sharing our faith but producing substandard and tardy work does not glorify our God of excellence.

The Importance of Character

Ecclesiastes 7:1 tells us that a good name is better than fine perfume. A small drop of perfume fills the entire room, and our lives should impact those around us in the same way. This simple point provides a challenge to students to examine how their character is regarded by others on campus and/or in the workplace. This can lead into fruitful discussion of the importance of character in business and leadership. John Maxwell's *Becoming a Person of Influence* (Maxwell, 2005) provides useful insights for business students on how character is formed and why it is so important in business and life.

PART SIX: CONCLUSIONS

Following Saylor (2006), this article maintains that business classes can be fun! Furthermore, in a postmodern and increasingly post-literate world, they need to be! This paper shows how the teaching of introductory marketing concepts can be reinforced through an enjoyable experiential exercise that involves spraying perfume on students' wrists and getting them to develop appropriate marketing plans for the perfume. Through the exercise students come to understand the interrelationships between the four Ps of marketing, the importance of market segmentation and target marketing. It also provides opportunities to introduce the concepts of international business, intellectual property and semiotics. The exercise also affords the instructor opportunities to explore the importance of character in business, the importance of living consistent Christian lives and the extent to which branding and advertising can shape our lives, often unwittingly, causing us to bow down to the contemporary idols of success, influence, and romance.

ENDNOTES

¹ Truth, Joy, and Eternity are names of Perfumes: *Truth* and *Eternity* by Calvin Klein, Joy by Jean Patou.

² After class feedback, March, 2005.

³ Student evaluations, Marketing, May 2005, and May 2006.

⁴ Student evaluations, Marketing, May 2006.

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