

Wake Up and Smell the Pizzelles

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Understanding how sensory aspects of products (i.e., the touch, taste, smell, sound and visual aspects of products) affect consumer emotions, memories, perceptions, preferences, choices and consumption of products is big business. Memory and smells are tied closely together. More than pictures or sounds, a scent can really bring back memories and evoke emotions.

- In 2012 Kellogg's mailed a scratch-n-sniff Pop Tart post card that smelled like a strawberry milkshake.
- The Holiday Inn hotels use a rose scent for weddings and a leather-based scent for business meetings.
- Nike stores use a mixed flower scent to direct shoppers towards the more expensive shoe designs inside.
- Even funeral homes have jumped on the bandwagon by infusing the building with industrial strength cinnamon spray to disguise the smells of human decay.

Well, on that note (and having worked in a funeral home many years ago not remembering any cinnamon), I, too, have leveraged sight and smell to attract and acquire new customers.

In 2002, my family launched a unique and nostalgic product during the .com boom — www.bellapizzelle.com — to an underserved market whose options were mass-produced look-alikes. Bella means "beautiful" in Italian, and Pizzelle is a traditional cookie handmade in irons (some electric, some used over gas stoves). The sight alone of a pizzelle cookie evokes good memories of family times for many people, especially of Italian heritage, who came to America but kept the Old World traditions alive. The flavor and texture and the crunchy goodness of these gourmet delicacies are long remembered after the bite. One of my customers said:

"I recently received an order of Bellapizzelles as a gift. The moment I opened it the most amazing aroma flooded my office. I took them home to share with my family, and my wife became addicted... The flavor is wonderful... outstanding with a cup of tea or coffee."

Our bakery, located on the lower level of our home, fills the entire place (and reaches neighbors) with hints of vanilla, anise, chocolate. Those scents fill our minds — and those of our customers — with childhood memories of being at Grandma's house, with family, where pizzelles would linger in tin cans but still be flavor-packed and crispy, to be shared among us grandkids, down the last crumb.

And get a whiff of this! When some of our customers send BellaPizzelles as a gift, they add a BellaPizzelle candle to the order. The gift recipients receive and serve the pizzelles while a vanilla, anise, or chocolate chip candle is burning, disguising their kitchen as if they had slaved away, baking pizzelles all day.

What does this all mean?

Customer experiences matter. As marketers, we want to create and enhance exceptional experiences. In his book *Enchantment*, Guy Kawasaki shares "One must understand what people are thinking, feeling and believing in order to enchant them." Organizations are ever-evolving and becoming more and more strategic, more customer-centric. Enchantment involves building trust, loyalty, and winning over hearts, and minds. Here's a great example:

"I got my order and gave my husband his birthday gift a few days early... His grandmother had passed away and the only thing I really remember about that day was the talk of the pizzelles by the whole family.

I thought it would be nice to give some to my husband, an excuse to sit back and remember old times. And it worked. We spent a few hours talking about Gramma and the cookies and the family get-togethers while we ate these wonderful cookies he hated to admit were as good as Gramma's (because you know nothing is supposed to be as good as your own grandmother's).

I, myself, had never had a pizzelle... This (your cookies) has to be the single most delightful food I have ever had. I ate more than my fair share of my husband's birthday gift. He thinks I gave him the cookies of his youth as a gift. I think I gave him back his Gramma for a few hours. I guess it really doesn't matter much who is right.

We had a nice time, the four of us, as most of his recollection of his grandmother was directed to the kids. Oh anyway, thank you! The pizzelles were wonderful!"

At Bellapizzelle, we offer much more than stacks of traditional handmade-to-order cookies. One of our customers insisted on using a pizzelle (instead of a pillow) to carry the wedding bands up the aisle during her wedding ceremony. Priceless.

With the speed of technology, media proliferation, moral confusion, and world news that can jolt us from day to day, we'd like to figuratively stop the clock, if only for a moment, and give our customers an exceptional experience to remember, and evangelize. 🍪



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Direct Marketing Association, Former Member Chair and Liaison to the Advisory Council, Internship Chair, and Philadelphia's 2011 Direct Marketer of the Year. Denise is regarded as an expert in both B2B & B2C direct response marketing. She has led creative teams in the launch of major brands in the US including Progressive Insurance, Response Insurance, Nextel, Sun Microsystems, Sterling Commerce, LENA, Tandberg, ADT Video Surveillance, Tyco Healthcare, plus a host of .com brands. Denise continues to bring innovation and strategies that work to drive action, anchor relationships, and produce ROI for her clients. On the side, Denise and her family own and operate www.bellapizzelle.com in its 11th year of continued success. Denise tweets from Bellapizzelle on updates and good food finds. Read client, peer, and associate endorsements at <http://www.linkedin.com/in/denisedwilliams>