



# An Exploration of Scent & Emotion between Strangers

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P&G Prestige Fragrances

2015 Jay Chiat Awards  
Category: National Strategy & Media Strategy



## Summary

Fragrance category sales had been in decline for several years and one seemingly insurmountable hurdle stood in its way: the digital landscape. Why? Because you can't smell through a screen. Trial through actually smelling a fragrance is a proven way to get people to buy a new fragrance. We needed to find a way to translate the power of scent to the digital space for P&G Prestige Fragrances.

We made it our mission to better understand the human senses. What we realized was that the sense of smell is most closely linked to memory and emotions. So, our strategy was to demonstrate the feelings and emotions of smell in a VISUAL way that would come thru on a screen.

We filmed a social experiment about scent. Strangers wore blindfolds and we had them describe their emotions as they smelled each other. It was remarkable how accurately they described physical attributes and innate characteristics of their unseen partner based simply upon their perfumed scent. We turned the footage into a video series called "Smell My Neck." The series was viewed over 6 million times and the campaign resulted in an incredible holiday season with category sales increasing 3% vs. year ago.

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## Background

### P&G Prestige Fragrances Faced a Category Decline

The fragrance industry was lagging with both sales and number of category users in decline for over four years. A major driving force behind the decline is the rise of the digital world. Our target increasingly interacts with brands, people and even makes purchases via digital and mobile devices. And you can't smell through a screen. So proven sales drivers for the fragrance category - free trials and samples handed out to shoppers in stores – just don't work in the digital space. How can people tell if they like a fragrance if they can't give it a sniff? There is simply no way for consumers to test out a scent at digital point-of-purchase.

We set out to help P&G Prestige Fragrances reverse the category trend and inspire online purchases among lapsed users and beauty enthusiasts.

Our challenge was to find a way to convey the power of scent on a screen.

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## Our Insight

*Scent Has the Power to Evoke Powerful Emotions, Especially When You Are Deprived of Sight*

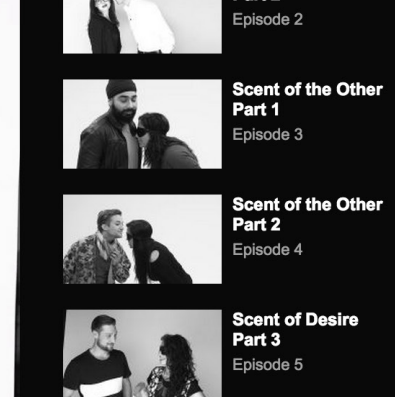
Our team got together and had deep discussions about the five human senses. We talked about how they help you experience the world, the feelings a sensory experience can evoke within you and what heightens them. As we brainstormed, we discovered that the olfactory sense of smell is most closely linked to memory and emotions. A scent or smell is an incredibly powerful connection that can take people immediately back to a single place and memory in time, sometimes to one that they didn't even know was still there in their minds. Think of being transported to your childhood home with smells of holiday cooking. Think of how your grandmother's perfume smelled when you were a young child. Think of the scent of your first love as a teenager, and the memories and feelings (and pheromones) just come pouring back.

We also learned that sight and scent are linked. And specifically, when deprived of sight, the sense of smell is often heightened. In fact, we noticed that when people describe a scent and what it means to them, more often than not, they close their eyes.

It was this link between scent, sight and emotions that became our inspiration. Particularly, the idea of sight deprivation and the effect it has on helping the mind focus more intently on the sense of smell. It's a really powerful tool that evokes heightened emotions.

So, our strategy was to convey the power of scent – in a screen-based, digital world - through a combination of emotion and sight deprivation.

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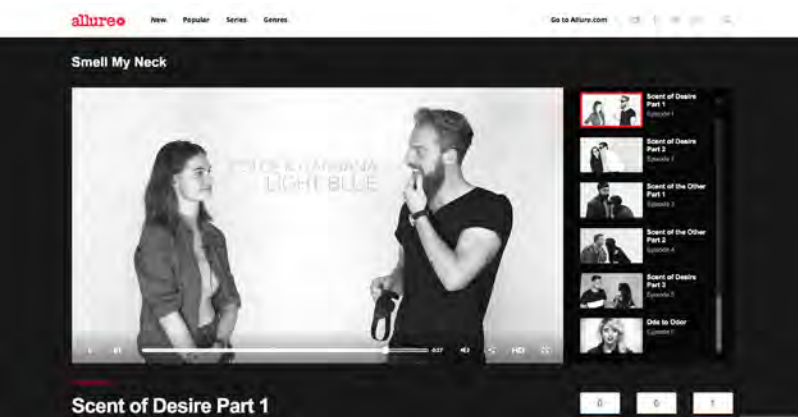


## The Idea: Smell My Neck

Our idea was to create and film a social experiment. We put strangers together and blindfolded one of them, asking that person describe the unique, perfumed scent of the person they were paired with; along with their physical attributes, details about their personality, their emotional qualities and hints at their intimate nature. So, our strategy was to test this out and film it.

The experiment played on the idea of pheromones and scent as the basis for human attraction; a universally relatable concept. The resulting film that we captured was remarkable. The degree to which just the scent of another person could evoke such rich and intimate understanding of a stranger and spark so much chemistry, even while blindfolded, was uncanny. The strangers forged bonds almost immediately within minutes of the blindfolded, neck smelling activity without relying on their sense of sight. One was even able to accurately guess the name of his partner.

The resulting film we captured was incredibly rich and we were able to turn it into six shorter videos. This content became the cornerstone of our campaign.



We turned our video content into a web series of six episodes that were each roughly a couple minutes in length. They had provocative titles like, "Scent of the Other" and "Scent of Desire". Using black and white helped the viewer to experience a sort of sight deprivation too, helping them to visually focus on the emotions scent inspired in the strangers in the videos.

In addition, we wanted to connect this experience closely to commerce and the actual purchase experience. Think of it as the digital version of in-store perfume trials. Sephora was our retail partner in this. Not only did they showcase the films in-store and promote P&G Prestige Fragrances more heavily on-site at their stores, but we crafted our emotionally charged digital content into bite sized adverts that allowed for in-banner purchase directly through Sephora as well. This meant that customers could stay on the same purchasing page and select their fragrances under the influence of our evocative branded content.

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Allure @Allure\_magazine · Nov 12

What happens when strangers judge each other based solely on their perfume? We found out:



Allure

December 16, 2014 ·

What scent reminds you of home? <http://on.allure.com/1A41ITj>



Smell My Neck - "Ode to Odor"  
Episode 6

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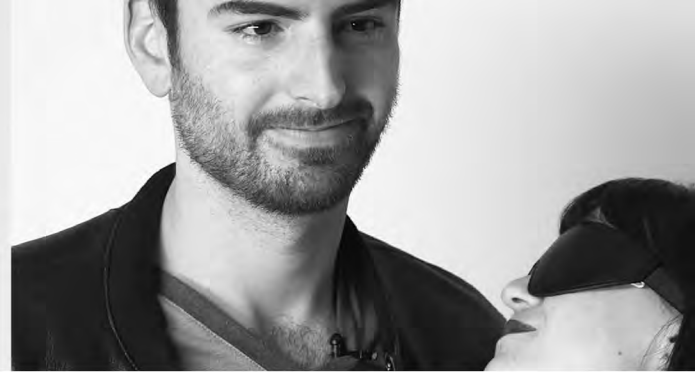


Allure

November 8, 2014 ·

What do you smell like? There's only one way to find out:  
<http://on.allure.com/1uHkQFZ>





## Results

Smell My Neck successfully translated the emotional experience of scent to the digital space in a visual way.

The video content was viewed over 6 million times, resulting in an incredible holiday season:

- Fragrance category sales lift of 3% versus year ago
  - In-banner purchases more than tripled the typical comparable benchmark
  - View through rate (video completion) exceeded benchmark by 16% and CTR doubled industry benchmarks - extremely engaging for long form content
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