

# An Experimental Design for Relating Personality to Perfumes

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**Synopsis**—Fragrances are classified according to psychological effects rather than descriptive terms. A system has been devised to show perfume characteristics in a graphic form. A corresponding system serves to establish personal profiles. Fragrances and personalities are related by matching the respective patterns.

In describing a fragrance, almost any perfumer will respond by naming the aromatic raw materials which he thinks are in the perfume compound. This is appropriate to his work but virtually meaningless to the consumer. Nevertheless, manufacturers persist in defining their perfumes in this manner (1).

Instead of stating what the perfume *is* (what it is made of), it is more informative to determine what it *does* (what psychological effects it exercises). To give an example from another area: if a wall paper is called “yellow,” that is a plain description of the paper’s color; but if it is called “cheerful,” that is a description of the *effect* the color has on the beholder.

The effect of any work of art—and perfume is no exception—depends on the use of contrasts, on the opposites joined to create an entity. One of the finest symbols of this principle is the Chinese sign of Yang and Yin representing day and night, male and female, etc.

## FRAGRANCE PROFILE

The system worked out for this fragrance classification relies on the principle of polarity and utilizes Jellinek’s work (2–3).

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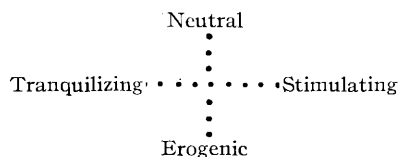


Figure 1. Psychological effects of fragrance

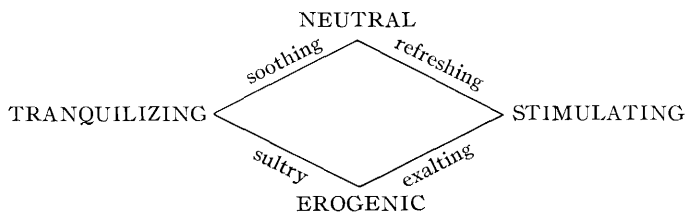


Figure 2. Psychological effects of fragrance

The first psychological effect of fragrance to be considered is whether it is erogenic or not. Erogenic, of course, is a coined word which simply means having sex appeal. For the opposite of sex appeal, the word neutral is used. The next consideration concerns the contrast between stimulating and tranquilizing effects. If these two contrasts are arranged in vertical and horizontal opposition, a cross pattern is obtained (Fig. 1). The four major effects can then be combined in different ways. By connecting the four points, a diamond is formed (Fig. 2), and additional effects are derived from the combinations of stimulating with erogenic, stimulating with neutral and tranquilizing with erogenic or with neutral. The resulting effects, as seen on opposite sides of the diamond, i.e., refreshing *vs.* sultry and exalting *vs.* soothing, conform again to the principle of polarity.

The scheme now comprises eight psychological effects of fragrances, opposed to polarity but also capable of forming a continuous odor spectrum by following the perimeter of the rhombic figure.

Next is the crucial step of aligning actual fragrances with the range of psychological effects. Figure 3 illustrates where some well-known odor types belong on the chart. This assignment is based on Jellinek's theory (2, 3), even though there is as yet no valid scientific evidence that Jellinek's system is true. Nevertheless, it can serve as a basis for the development of Fragrance Profiles for finished perfumes or colognes. It must be emphasized that a fragrance creation is called a compound or a composition, which expresses the fact that it is made up of many elements which together produce a unique entity. Then—

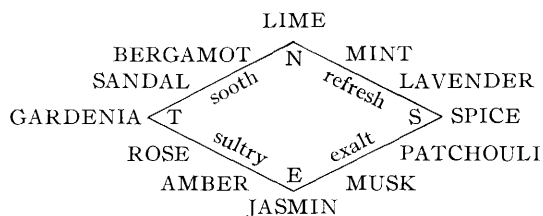


Figure 3. Representative perfume materials placed according to effects

how does one go about charting a fragrance profile? One searches for the area of greatest emphasis and marks it prominently on the appropriate place alongside the perimeter of the diamond pattern. Next, the secondary accents are indicated but not as outstanding as the main element.

To illustrate practical application, here are a few examples of Fragrance Profiles. Figure 4A represents Perfume A, which in the parlance of "what it is" would be described as "modern-floral", "floral" because it contains a lot of flower oils or corresponding aromatics, and "modern" as a consumer-oriented synonym for higher fatty aldehydes, which are another and distinctive ingredient. In terms of psychological effects, this fragrance encompasses all, but the prominent effect is erogenic (jasmin and aldehydes). It leans somewhat to the exalting (musk) but a little more towards the tranquilizing (rose). This relative roundness, the absence of drastic contrasts or extremes, and the mild emphasis of the effects most generally desired from perfume may well explain the great popularity of this fragrance type.

Figure 4B describes a different story. Perfume B shares the erogenic effect with Perfume A, but the emphasis is on stimulating and fresh (spice and lavender). Nothing of a sultry or tranquilizing nature is found in this fragrance.

Figure 4C illustrates emphasis on the opposite side. Perfume C has its erogenic and exalting components, but the prominence is in the area of sultry (amber and vanilla), which would be unbearable and artistically unsatisfactory if it were not balanced by a strong secondary accent in the soothing-neutral region (bergamot).

Finally, Fig. 4D gives the profiles of an exceptional fragrance product, one without any erogenic effects. Classical cologne is refreshing (citrus) and soothing (bergamot); it leans a little to the tranquilizing side (neroli) but is sexually neutral. Thus men as well as women and even children can use it quite properly.

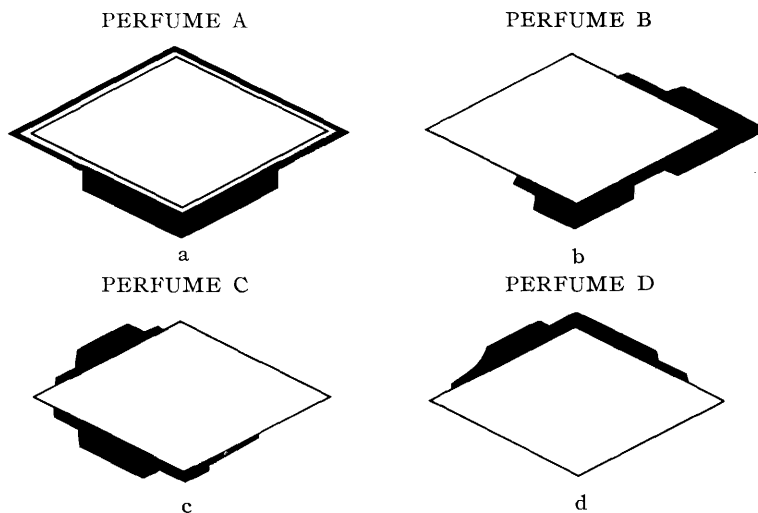


Figure 4. Fragrance Profiles; a—modern/floral bouquet; b—fresh/spicy/modern/floral; c—oriental; d—classical eau de cologne.

These examples are sufficient to demonstrate the principle involved. There is, theoretically at least, a specific fragrance profile for every original perfume.

#### PERSONALITY PROFILE

Up to this point, a method for classification of fragrances has been established, and a graphic system for its notation has been shown. How can these fragrance profiles be related to personalities?

The method consists of identifying the personality elements which need to be considered in a manner analogous to that used for the Fragrance Profiles. Polar definitions must be set up and placed at opposite corners of the diamond pattern to obtain corresponding Personal Profiles. It has been shown three elements are required for designing Personality Profiles (4, 5).

The first factor is called *personality* (Fig. 5A). At the top and bottom corners of the diamond are found natural and sophisticated, at the right and left corners independent and compliant. In order to establish the profile, the preferred one of each of the two pairs is checked.

The next factor is called *temperament* (Fig. 5B). Exactly the same principle of juxtaposition is applied: cool *vs.* warm and vivacious *vs.* calm.

The last factor is called *dress* (Fig. 5C), which should be understood to incorporate all aspects of outward appearance such as makeup and

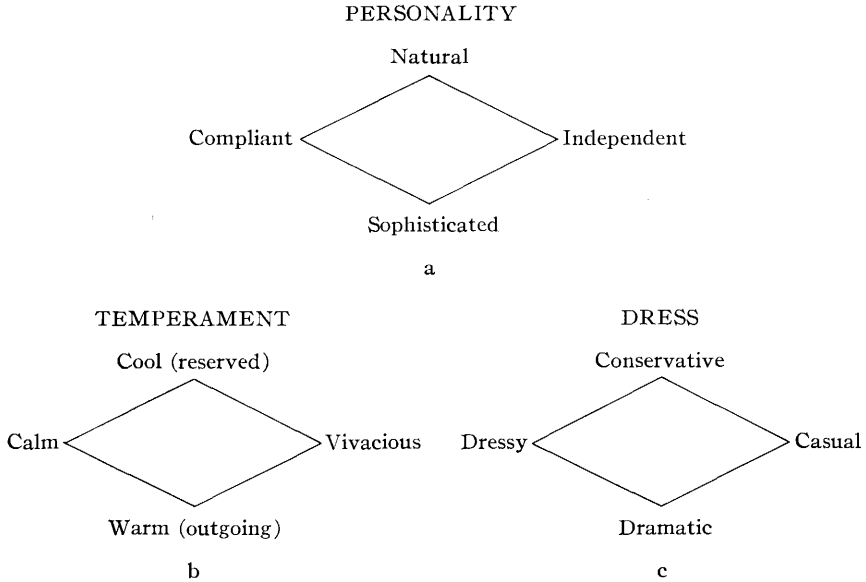


Figure 5. Personal Profile elements; a—personality; b—temperament; c—dress.

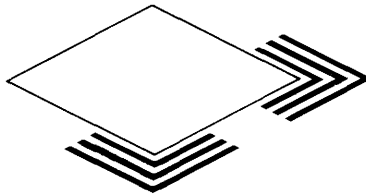


Figure 6. Personal Profile; elements combined: independent/sophisticated; vivacious/warm; and casual/dramatic.

hair style: conservative as opposed to dramatic, and casual *vs.* dressy. Here again, one each of the opposing preferences is to be checked, yielding those applicable to the occasion for which the perfume is to be used.

Figure 6 demonstrates how a completed Personality Profile might look. From the personality chart the elements of independent and sophisticated have been selected; from the temperament chart, vivacious and warm are the choices. Finally, the fragrance is to be worn with a dress that is both casual and dramatic.

The resulting pattern is rather one-sided, with all the emphasis on the right-hand and bottom corners, but is nevertheless not unusual. This pattern (Fig. 6) is similar to the Fragrance Profile demonstrated in

Fig. 4B. The conclusion is, of course, that Perfume B would be a happy and appropriate choice for a woman with the Personal Profile of Fig. 6.

For the purpose of explaining this principle it is sufficient to cite only one example. Actually, 16 different Personal Profiles can be obtained, using all possible combinations of the various elements described above.

#### DISCUSSION AND SUMMARY

It has been asked—what happens if the individual selecting the Personal Profile pattern is not “truthful?” The answer is: “It doesn’t matter,” because the question misses the point. The point is that a suitable fragrance can be found to parallel a given Personality Profile, whether this reflects the “real self” or the “desired self.” Since role-playing is an integral part of our social lives, it is perfectly legitimate to select fragrances—the ultimate accessories—as props to support chosen roles. The whole idea of relating personality characteristics to fragrance effects is meant to serve as a guide to the selection of suitable perfumes from an otherwise bewildering and confusing multitude of choices. The outlined system can achieve this better than any other merely verbal ingredient-descriptive way of recommendation.

A small commercial, not scientific, experiment has been conducted by Custom Fragrance Corp., in which eight fragrances, designed for different psychological effects, were made available. Also available were printed materials for the charting of Personality Profiles and comparison with Fragrance Profiles. The practical experience of the custom fragrance project was satisfactory and encouraging. Many participants were intrigued by the procedure and pleased with the results.

It is hoped that additional studies of the relationship between fragrance-type and personality traits will shed further light on this subject.

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