



CICLO

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ISPA - INSTITUTO UNIVERSITÁRIO

ODORS HAVING POSITIVE IMPACTS: GOING BEYOND PLEASANTNESS



**MONIQUE
SMEETS**

UTRECHT UNIVERSITY,
UNILEVER R&D

Odors can have powerful effects on our behavior, even when we think they don't. One of the topics we investigate at Utrecht University is how odors drive positive, or desirable, social behaviors. Is it just a matter of pleasantness, such that the more pleasant the fragrance, the more impact it has on positive behavior, or is there more to it? In this presentation, I want to share some recent insights from two studies in this area. Previous work by Hendriks, Holland & Aarts (2005) showed that exposure to citrus odor enhances cleaning behavior. As citrus odors are among the most-liked odors, we wondered whether this result is mediated by liking for the odor. Similar to Hendriks et al. we found an enhanced effect of a pleasant, typical cleaning fragrance on cleaning behavior, but not of an equally liked odor not related to cleaning. Rather, there was a significant effect of context, with the cleaning fragrance having the largest effect on cleaning behavior when the fragrance was presented in a realistic, immersive Virtual Reality context compared to a traditional lab setting. These results suggest that the ecologically valid context facilitated the olfactory information to mentally connect with the relevant concepts ('sensory cueing' of clean), and that the effect was not due to pleasantness alone.

Body odors are especially interesting because they can have positive effects on human behavior and emotion - such as on happiness (De Groot et al. 2015) - even when they do not smell very pleasant. However, hidden in the very complex mixture of chemicals that makes up body odor, we do find pleasantly smelling compounds such as hexanal (the highly liked green grass odor). Do such pleasantly smelling compounds play a role in eliciting these effects? In the second study I want to present, we investigated the effects of hexanal, unmasked and masked by clove, on interpersonal trust. Again, we found positive effects that could be explained by pleasantness only, as hexanal increased interpersonal trust when masked by the less pleasant clove as well as on its own (van Nieuwenburg et al. 2019). While pleasantness is a major dimension of odor perception, situational and chemical contexts play an important role in driving behavioral effects.

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12H30 | AUDITÓRIO 1

ENTRADA LIVRE

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