

# Touch and Smell

The impact of touch and smell on plant sales



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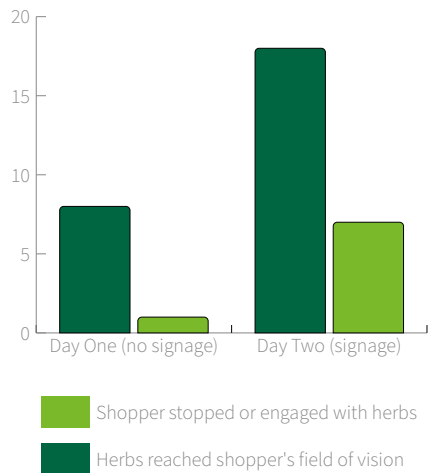
## What the Shopper Research Showed

### Correlation between touch and purchase

Research from other sectors<sup>1</sup> shows a link between increased touch of goods and increased purchasing. In our shopper research we compared shopper engagement with herb benches. On day one no signage was present encouraging touch. On day two signage encouraging touch was displayed. We found that there was increased shopper engagement with the herbs on the day where the signage was put up.

We followed this up with tests of signage encouraging touch and smell of lavender and of herbs. Sales over a two week period in two stores were compared with a control group of seven stores where no signage was displayed. The control group were in similar areas and were running the same promotions. Sales uplifts of 4% and 14% were recorded for herbs, whilst a third test on lavender was inconclusive.

The chart shows one in eight shoppers engaging with the herbs without the signage encouraging touch. With the signage added over one in three engaged with the herbs.



1 = Peck and Childers 2006, If I touch it I have to have it: Individual and environmental influences on impulse purchasing

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### What the Shopper Research Showed



#### Permission to Touch

It appears the signage 'gave permission' to engage with the category, and seeing other shoppers touching the herbs encouraged others to do so too. This prompted discussions among shoppers about the enjoyable, unusual, or previously unknown smells. It also prompted discussion of pleasurable occasions, meals and foods, and in some cases discussion of pleasurable memories.

We could conclude that seeing other shoppers smelling the herbs is likely to encourage other shoppers to follow suit. Encouraging touch and smell in herbs helped engage shoppers in, a category that lacks the flower and colour contrasts.





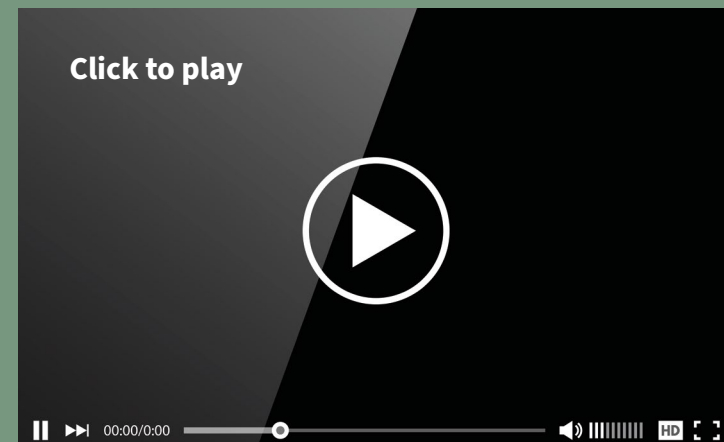
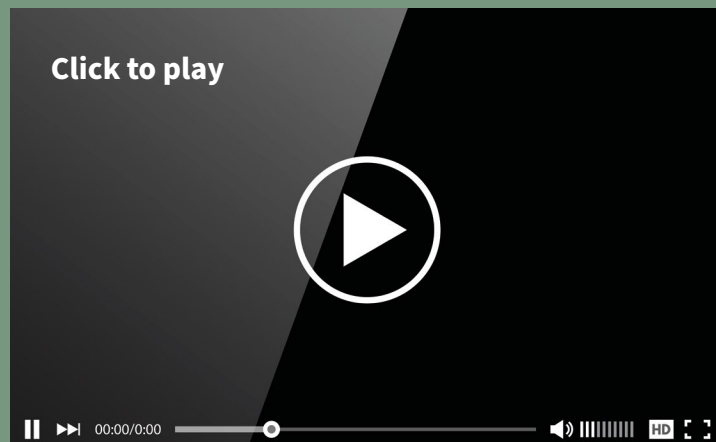
### 👁️ What the Shoppers Saw

#### Touch Increases Purchase

In the first clip we see the shopper stopped by the sign among the herbs. Touch and smell of the higher priced pre-planted containers then leads them to engage with the £1.99 herbs on the next bench. The fact the shopper initially engaged with pre-planted containers at £18.95 will have improved the perceived value for money of the £1.99 herbs (see our content on pricing and the anchor effect). The multi- buy offer on the bench edge is referenced after the engagement with plants, encouraging purchase. This all shows how touch combined with other merchandising and offers can help increase purchases.

#### Added Satisfaction

In the second clip we see a similar process of engagement. This time, although the shopper's eye goes to the £1.99 herbs they move past them (they may have benefited from being closer to the pre-planted herb containers). However we should note how the smell of the herbs prompts discussion, happy memories and nostalgia among the shoppers. The experience is clearly adding to their enjoyment of the shopping trip and to their satisfaction with the garden centre. These two clips are typical of footage captured across the research.



## Possible Opportunities

### Encouraging Touch and Smell

There's evidence that encouraging touch helped improve the sales performance of herbs and lavender. There may be opportunities to extend this to other plants with novel textures or smells, helping to increase shopper enjoyment and purchase. Obviously care needs to be taken over toxic and delicate plants, but this aside touch and smell can be harnessed to improve sales performance. Of three valid store tests performed on herbs and lavender where shoppers were encouraged to touch and smell, two tests showed sales uplifts of 4% and 14% compared with a control group. The third test showed an uplift of 26%, but sales remained high when the signage encouraging touch was removed, suggesting other factors at play in that level of sales increase. These results are based on a small sample and should be treated with caution however.

### Linking Touch and Smell to Impulse Purchase

Encouraging touch and smell alone will not necessarily convert into sales. If such tactics are used, it may also be worth considering how this engagement can be 'closed' at the display. For instance can multi-buy or other inducements to 'buy now' be deployed to close sales alongside signs encouraging touch or smell?



### Smells and Novice Gardeners

The smell of different plants will be unknown to many shoppers, especially less keen or experienced gardeners. Encouraging smell of plants as wide ranging as hyacinth, citrus blossom, real Christmas tree foliage, and countless others could add to the appeal of different plants and educate shoppers about their value.

