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Cross-Cultural Olfactory Study

- Presentation of an ongoing research project -

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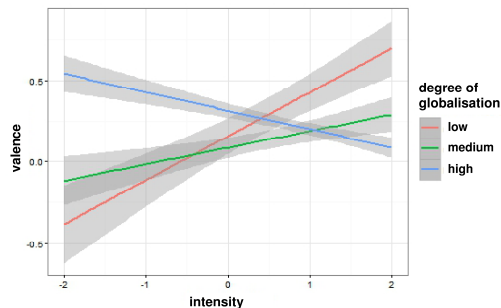
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In the present study, a standardised set of ten smells is presented to persons from various cultural backgrounds. Particular attention is paid to the aspect of indigenous vs. globalised culture. It is assumed that for indigenous peoples, smells play a much more important role in their daily lives, whereas persons with globalised lifestyle usually replace natural smells with artificial smells or neutralise them. It is also assumed that smells are named in a more precise way by indigenous peoples than by persons with globalised backgrounds, as indigenous languages usually are more precise and equipped with highly complex grammar. Data collection in this study is done with a mixed-type questionnaire, containing questions to be answered on a Likert scale, as well as yes/no and open answer modalities. Up to now, data collections have taken place during field studies in Africa, India and Latin America, during UN sessions with indigenous participants and at several, mostly European, Universities.

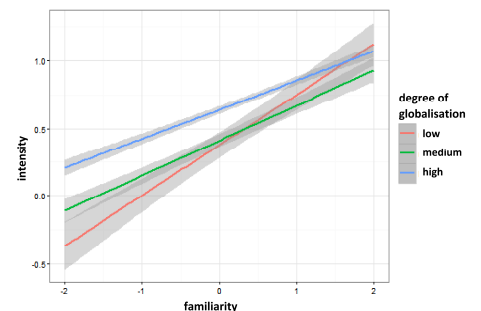
Preliminary results show that persons from low-globalised cultures, as compared to persons from medium or highly globalised cultures, are more likely to name a smell, and they are also more likely to associate a given smell with a taste they know. Whereas the interaction of familiarity and intensity is only slightly more pronounced among persons from low-globalised cultures, the interaction of valence and intensity is negative for persons from highly globalised cultures, while it is slightly positive for persons from medium globalised cultures, and even markedly positive for persons from low-globalised cultures. Already early data had shown that intensity was rated higher, the higher the degree of globalisation.



Administering a smell in the field (photo: courtesy Fritz Braeuer, 2010)



Interaction of valence and intensity in different degrees of globalisation (N=533).



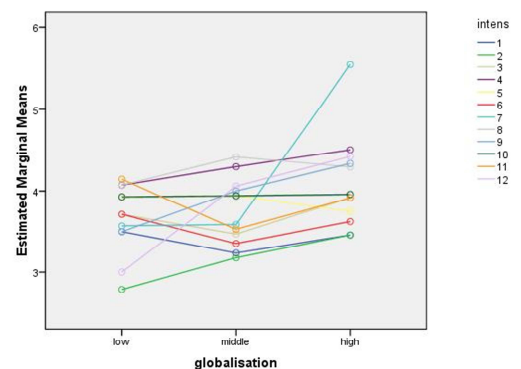
Interaction of intensity and familiarity in different degrees of globalisation (N=533).



The 12 "Sniffin' Sticks"
(Burghart Messtechnik GmbH)

Medium and low globalised persons like strong smells, but highly globalised persons don't.

Estimated Marginal Means of Intensity



Relation of perceived intensity and degree of globalisation for the 12 smells (N=79).

	<i>B (SE)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>CI</i>
low globalized	0.50 (0.11)	.00*	0.28; 0.73
middle globalized	0.64 (0.07)	.00*	0.51; 0.77
highly globalized	0.23 (0.06)	.00*	0.12; 0.35

Note. * - $p < .05$. $N = 573$. Explained Variance: $R^2 = .19$, $F(5, 567) = 26.24$, $p = .00$.

Main Effects of Focal Values in Intensity on Valence