

A close-up, profile view of a woman with long, wavy brown hair. She is holding a small, clear glass perfume bottle with a silver cap to her nose, sniffing it. Her eyes are closed, and she has a slight smile. The background is softly blurred, showing what appears to be an outdoor setting with greenery.

SMART SMART SCENT AI SCENT AI

Fragrance indecision has become one of the biggest challenges in modern retail environments. With more than 17,000 perfumes cataloged by “Fragrances of the World”, the traditional method of random sniffing is no longer effective.

iRomaScents addresses this complexity with a structured, intuitive AI-driven discovery process that limits scent exposure to avoid olfactory fatigue. By asking the relevant questions, the “AI Wizard” guides shoppers to a confident purchase decision in under a minute.

COSSMA: How are you responding to the long-standing challenge of indecision among fragrance buyers in store environments?

Avner Gal: The challenge of indecision among fragrance buyers raised from the fact that the number of alternatives increased dramatically. While there is no exact total, “Fragrances of the World” has currently archived profiles of over 17,000 different perfumes in their online database. Clearly, it’s almost impossible to decide, as long as one uses the conventional approach (random sniffing). In order to enable decision making, an intuitive, structural process must be used, given that the number of active sniffing will be as low as maximum 4 to 5 smells (in order to prevent saturation of the olfactory system, which causes inability to distinguish between scents). That said, iRomaScents followed these rules while developing its solution. After many observations and learning the behavior of sellers and buyers in different types of stores, and after learning the wheel of fragrances, we developed the “AI Wizard”, which asks the relevant questions, which refer to both the nature of the scented products, on one hand, and the expectations of the user, on the other hand, and wisely correlates the answers.

The key to practicality was asking the right questions and right number of questions, in order not to create a long and boring process; using closed and intuitive questions, so that even a person who lacks “understanding of fragrances” will be able to answer; preventing sniffing during the process. After development, we introduced our solution to as many people as possible, to hear their feedback after using the system, and based on that we improved the “Wizard” as needed.

What are the most significant shifts you're seeing in how retailers approach scent discovery and product sampling in 2026?

The fragrance world is a very conservative one. Therefore, unfortunately, we don’t foresee significant shifts in approaching scent discovery in the near future. That said, we do believe that adapting iRomaScents will cause the expected shift, and hopefully we’ll be able to see the beginning of the modern approach in relatively big numbers already during 2026.

How does the compact design and multi-fragrance capability influence store layout and product assortment strategies?

iRomaScents was designed with spatial efficiency in mind. The system requires minimal desk and / or shelf space (as little as a 25” X 10” or 1.8 ft2), making it easy to integrate into almost any retail environment. The system is operated by a very powerful, customized battery pack, which frees the need for a nearby electricity outlet, giving full flexibility to locate it almost anywhere, as well as the ability to change

INTERVIEW



Avner Gal
CEO and Co-Founder,
iRomaScents, Tel Aviv, Israel,
www.iromascents.com

locations, based on traffic and /or other data. Moreover, the need to make all the tester bottles available is negated, leaving space for marketing displays only. Each unit contains a rotating container (“drum”), capable of holding up to 45 fragrances. Retailers looking to expand their offering can simply add additional units, allowing for up to 135 fragrance choices within the same system. This modular approach gives retailers flexibility in assortment planning without sacrificing valuable retail space.

Can you share how you help retailers gain deeper customer preference insights, and how those insights are used?

While running the “AI Wizard”, iRomaScents collects the user’s answers for each question. This data is analyzed offline, giving the relevant preferences, as well as statistical correlation between the different collected parameters. That allows retailers to clearly see which fragrances and parameters’ combinations resonate mostly among customers.

Having this data, retailers can better plan the marketing activities, focus on customers’ preferences, and identify non-popular items and parameters. Moreover, this insight enables more accurate stock management, helping retailers reduce overstocking while ensuring top-performing fragrances are always available.

The system has also a program which shows promoted items. Fragrances that underperform can be supported through targeted promotions, while long-term data trends inform future buying decisions. Over time, retailers gain a deep understanding of their customers’ collective preferences, allowing them to refine merchandising strategies with far greater confidence.

What retailer feedback have you received regarding conversion improvements and customer engagement?

After using iRomaScents, a typical reaction of salespersons is: “Hey, this will help me sell the products!” They find it easier to conduct conversation with customers rather than the traditional approach of inviting customers trying to smell scents. The process is faster, more intuitive and involves an enhanced shopping experience. The likelihood of making a decision and conduct a purchase is much higher, and the salesperson can treat faster and more customers simultaneously.

It may be very difficult for the store staff to take care of foreign customers without speaking the customer’s language. However, with iRomaScents station, the approach to foreign customers is made intuitive, due to the ability to choose a different language from the Home Screen. A retailer deliberately added to iRomaScents some fragrances which were not available in the store in order to

promote the use of online shopping. Items which were available online only could have been sampled by using our station in-store. The store noticed that the online orders, after being introduced by iRomaScents, were increased. Industry-wide, average fragrance conversion rates typically sit around 5-10%. What excites retailers most is that iRomaScents has demonstrated conversion rates of over 90% — often in under one minute per customer interaction. This level of efficiency and engagement is transformative, particularly in high-traffic retail environments.

How do you see the role of digital scent delivery evolving in luxury versus mass-market fragrance retail?

Digital scent discovery is likely to be adopted more quickly in the mass market, where price points are more accessible and purchasing decisions are faster. That said, luxury fragrance houses are also beginning to explore this technology as a complementary tool. While conversion in luxury may take longer due to higher price points and more considered purchasing behavior, digital scent technology still offers significant value as an experiential and educational layer within the luxury retail journey.

New York Soho Pop-Up (May 2025): iRomaScents partnered with luxury perfumer Véronique Gabai at the Retail media Q Pop-Up in Soho, NYC. The event demonstrated how “mediterranean-inspired perfumery” could be introduced and sold through iRomaScents discovery, proving that even high-end, artistic brands, can use automation without losing their luxury appeal.

Rather than replacing sales associates, luxury houses can use the system as a “digital sommelier.” It handles the technical narrowing of choices, allowing the human associate to focus on storytelling, ingredient origins, and the “art” of the fragrance.

What operational pain points are retailers most eager to solve today, and how does your system help?

iRomaScents essentially automates the “consultation” part of fragrance sales. It turns a chaotic, low-conversion aisle into a data-rich, high-conversion self-service station that protects inventory while delighting customers. Retailers today are especially eager to solve several persistent operational pain points, ranging from low conversion rates to inventory shrinkage and lack of actionable data.

One of the biggest challenges is **olfactory fatigue and low conversion**. In traditional retail environments, customers often smell ten or more fragrances in random order, quickly overwhelming their senses and walking away without making a purchase. iRomaScents addresses this with smart curation through its “AI-Wizard,” which asks shoppers about their mood and preferences before recommending specific scents. Instead of guessing, customers are guided directly to fragrances that match their profile. As

a result, iRomaScents reports that this targeted approach can increase conversion rates from the industry average of around 10% to over 90%.

Another major issue is the “**experience**” gap, especially when fragrances are locked in display cases or kept behind the counter. Customers frequently have to wait for staff assistance, which disrupts the shopping flow and reduces engagement. iRomaScents eliminates this barrier by delivering a true sampling experience through an automated station. The device uses the actual fragrance to dispense a precise spritz — not just scented air — allowing customers to test the real product, even directly on their skin, without waiting for staff. **Staff efficiency** is also a critical concern, particularly as retailers operate with leaner teams. iRomaScents functions as an automated sales assistant by independently managing the discovery phase of the purchase journey. Customers can explore and test fragrances on their own, enabling store associates to focus on closing sales and handling transactions. This allows fewer staff members to serve more customers effectively.

Retailers are also focused on **reducing shrinkage and waste**. Open tester bottles can be stolen, damaged, or misused, leading to financial losses and messy displays. iRomaScents solves this with controlled dispensing technology that releases a precise spritz each time. There are no accessible open bottles, which protects high-value inventory, reduces waste, and maintains a cleaner, more secure retail environment. Finally, many retailers struggle with **data blind spots**. Traditional fragrance counters provide little insight beyond final sales numbers. iRomaScents captures real-time retail analytics, such as which scent families customers are exploring or trending demographic preferences (for example, men aged 25 – 35 gravitating toward woody notes over citrus). This actionable data enables retailers to refine inventory planning, merchandising strategies, and marketing efforts based on actual customer behavior rather than guesswork. Together, these capabilities position iRomaScents as a solution that enhances customer experience, increases conversion, improves operational efficiency, secures inventory, and delivers meaningful retail intelligence.

In an increasingly omnichannel world, how does iRomaScents support consistency between in-store and online discovery?

The platform was designed with omnichannel behavior in mind. Many customers still want to experience fragrance physically, even when purchasing online. iRomaScents enables online retailers to direct customers to nearby stores where they can sample scents before buying. **Example from a customer store in Japan:** A retailer deliberately added some fragrances to iRomaScents which were not available in the store, in order to promote the use of online shopping. Items which were available online only could have been sampled by using the iRomaScents station in-store. The store noticed



“We believe consumers will become more decisive in their fragrance purchases.”

that the online orders, after being introduced by iRomaScents were increased.

What lessons have you learned from pop-ups and experiential activations?

Feedback from global pop-ups and activations has been overwhelmingly positive. It gives us validation that what the company is doing, is going in the right direction, and whatever the company is trying to improve is the real pain point also from the consumer view. One of the most common questions we hear is, “Why isn’t this already in my favourite retailer?” “I wish fragrance shopping could be so easy.” “I enjoy the fact that there are so many choices before a single scent is suggested. I wanted to try different answers to see what kind of scents would come up. I tried three times by myself. It’s like a game!”

Customers are delighted not only by finding a fragrance they love, but by the playful, dynamic nature of the experience. Because recommendations can change depending on mood or answers given, customers often describe the experience as fun, surprising, and even game-like. It reintroduces enjoyment and curiosity into fragrance retail.

A common denominated remark, which repeats itself very frequently, is an almost unbelievable surprise that in such short time (~ one minute), the system gives an accurate recommendation, leading to the conclusive decision of purchasing the recommended item.

How important is data portability and integration with existing retail systems?

We recognize that data portability and system integration are important for retail partners. The iRomaScents system has the ability to connect with store CRM for fragrance purchases and the company is working progressively on this. At present, retailers receive comprehensive data reports from the platform, which already support effective stock and performance management without requiring system integration. By linking the “spritz” data to the final transaction at the POS, retailers can finally measure attribution. They can prove exactly how many people, who used the iRomaScents, went on to make a purchase, providing a clear ROI that would be impossible with traditional “open bottle” testers. In future, when a customer uses the “AI Wizard,” their scent preferences (e.g., “prefers citrus/neroli for daytime”) are instantly attached to their loyalty profile, after customer consent.

iRomaScents station also contains an optional mini sticker printer. The consumer can choose an automatic printout of the name and brand of their preferred (recommended) item and stick it to the scented blotter with the proper smell. With that, they can purchase the specific item even at a later stage.

What trends are you seeing in how retailers invest in technology to differentiate fragrance retail?

Retailers differentiate fragrance retail by investing in technology that makes discovery personalized and engaging

with AI; creates experiential retail moments that deepen emotional connection, uses data and omnichannel tools to stay connected with customers and enhance storytelling, as well as creative marketing with the help of generative tools. For physical shops, most investment is focused on preventing theft and robbery in-store. Almost all fragrances are located behind locked displays with only the sample bottle left out, locked. When the sample bottle is empty there is no immediate replacement until the store receives the new sample bottle.

How do you see scent technology expanding beyond traditional stores?

The next natural phase is scent discovery at home. As technology evolves, we expect scent experiences to move beyond retail environments and become part of everyday living spaces. It may become part of digital experiences, wellness, entertainment, and smart environments.

What are the biggest barriers to adopting scent discovery technologies?

We don’t believe there are significant barriers. Scent is inherently emotional, and when technology successfully delivers a sensory experience, it naturally captures attention and engagement. However, the fragrance community still a relatively conservative place, retailers still need some time to adopt the new technology and incorporate into their store design. Those retailers who sees the benefits of using iRomaScents instore already enjoy the benefits.

As sustainability shapes buying decisions, how does your technology support these priorities?

iRomaScents supports sustainability in several ways. By eliminating traditional testers, it removes the risk of product loss and theft. The controlled spray system, and the meaningful reduction of random sprays, significantly reduces paper blotter usage, minimizing waste of fragrances from over-spraying. In addition, the reduction of take-home samples and constant tester replenishment leads to lower costs and less environmental impact. At the same time, the interactive wizard provides shoppers with confident, personalized recommendations in just one to two minutes, reducing unnecessary sampling and guesswork.

Looking ahead 3 – 5 years, what shifts do you predict in fragrance discovery and purchasing?

Every retailer who sells fragrances will use iRomaScents in store. iRomaScents become strategic “sales tools” rather than just novelty kiosks. New brands and new products can be easy discovered and introduced; consumers get objective recommendations by using iRomaScents. We believe consumers will become more confident and decisive in their fragrance purchases. Reducing uncertainty benefits everyone, as customers feel more assured, and brands and retailers benefit from higher confidence and higher conversion rates.