



Paper Title

“Impact of Sensory Marketing on Consumers: Recreation industry in Muscat ”

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Abstract

The present research investigates the sensorial marketing strategy in relation to the recreation sector. The research examines the current literature made on sensorial marketing. The primary research is based on both qualitative and quantitative research. Qualitative data are collected through observation and interviews. The researcher has observed various malls, recreation center, restaurants and other places including gaming zones, cafes etc and their current position in relation to sensorial marketing strategy. Interviews have been conducted among professionals of the strategy from the organizations to have a more practical approach of the method, the position of the market in relation to sensory strategy and perspectives for the field. Finally, quantitative data have been collected through a questionnaire among customers to evaluate their buying behavior in relation to the strategy. Results conclude that the observed brands are implementing a five-dimensional sensory strategy, even though it presents a great potential. The questionnaire concludes that customers are positively reacting as far as sensorial marketing strategies and sensory cues are concerned. Finally, according to the interviewees, the field is facing positive perspectives in the sector, with an increasing development among the recreation industry.

Keywords:

Sensorial marketing, sensory marketing, sensory branding, five senses, multisensory experience, experimental marketing, consumer buying behavior, recreation industry, research methodology

1. Introduction

Since the marketing genesis in the 1950's, marketers are developing brand identities, product concepts and communication campaigns on the basis of human hearing and visual senses. Lindström (2005) states that 99% of the brands communicate only with two senses. In an increasingly growing competition and dealing with more intelligent, reasonable- rational customers. Around two decades ago, professionals have decided to expand sensory techniques by exploring the three underused senses (smell, touch and taste) and apply it to the sector, thus giving birth to a new field: sensorial marketing. Sensorial marketing comes along with other concepts like experiential and emotional marketing. Research keeps going on and theories and models are still being experimented on sensorial marketing, even though scholars agree that further research needs to be conducted. In fact, very few companies, including fashion brands, have a clearly defined sensory strategy or experiment it in an approximate way. As a result, little literature can be found on sensorial marketing applied to a specific sector. In current literature, a recurring objective is to trigger further research as professionals are convinced that each additional study can be very impactful for the domain. In this literature review five senses as well as consumers' perception is described. Then, an explanation of the multi-sensory concept is given with different approaches to implement this type of strategy as far as product and store design is concerned. Later on, the limits a company can challenge are defined.

2. Literature Review

The five human senses have great importance for an individual's different purchase experiences and consumption processes. By the help of senses, individuals become conscious of and perceive firms, products and brands. All kinds of physical stimuli are received by the senses then the perception process occurs. The types, amount and the way of these stimuli affect the perception process of the individual. Actually the senses are the starting point of perception and the retailers have understood the importance of store environment for using these stimuli to affect the perception of customers. Past researches have examined the main effects of these stimuli such as music, scent, atmosphere, tactile and taste. In an environmental psychology study, Mehrabian

and Russell (1974) explained that the environmental stimuli lead to an emotional reaction which in turn, brings out consumers' behavioral response. Actually this is the stimulus–organism–response paradigm. The model proposes that according to these environmental stimuli consumers have three emotional responses and these are; pleasure, arousal, and dominance (Mehrabian and Russell, 1974). By the way, these emotional responses result in two different behaviors which are approach or avoidance. Approach behavior means a desire for staying, exploring, and accepting to be with others in the environment (Booms and Bitner, 1980), on the other hand, avoidance behavior means escaping from the environment and ignoring to communicate with others. (Donovan and Rossiter, 1982). There are many studies which use Mehrabian and Russell's model, on the role of environmental stimuli as a predictor of consumer behaviors such as extra time spent in a store, purchase decision, variety seeking behavior and actual spending. In a study of Turley and Milliman (2000) 60 experiments that manipulated portions of a store's complex atmosphere are reviewed and in each study they found some statistically significant relationship between atmospherics and shopping behavior. Once a consumer's basic needs are met, as they currently are with many members of affluent societies in the West, the drive “to look for meaningful and emotionally satisfying experiences” will occur (Brown, 2009, pg. 111). Due to the advanced nature of technology's rapid evolution to meeting speed and convenience, these needs are met with expectancy and ease. Products and services no longer fight for attention on shelves of a marketplace, but on digital screens that are fixated within the palm of a user's hand. Despite the sophisticated emotional advancements in contemporary society, consumers are “seeking even more dimension” in the products and services they trust (Diller, Rhea & Shedroff, 2008, pg. 13). The reason lies in the fact that a brand can carry out more of a medium beyond just a visual stimulation—it can become a multi-sensory experience, one that will embody the brand to create new levels of meaning and communication toward a target audience. Few scholars have developed models on sensorial marketing and in this report two models are explained: the conceptual framework of sensorial marketing by Krishna (2011) and the SM model by Hultén (2009). Krishna (2011) brings- in her research in general- a more scientific approach to the subject than Lindström. She states that sensory marketing is an application of the understanding of sensation and perception to the field of marketing to consumer perception, cognition, emotion, learning, preference, choice, or evaluation. Hultén (2011), gives a different approach to the subject by explaining all the sensations a customer can

feel and how cues in store can express those sensations and transform shopping as an experience, thus agreeing on Linsdröm's point of view given above. This brings a more practical approach for stores. Hultén (2011) adds that consumers look for and buy emotional experiences around what has been bought and no longer buys products and services alone. The author defines sensory experience as an individual's perception of goods or services or other elements in a service process as an image that challenges the human mind and senses. When discussing the effects, Soars (2009) affirms that sensorial marketing –if applied appropriately- calms, relaxes, distresses, energizes, improves mood, influences decision-making and hence the propensity to spend money. Plus, it has a positive influence on waiting time. The author adds that stimuli can influence environments, improve the shopper experience and change the nature of behavior in ways beyond our consciousness. People perceive the world through all their senses simultaneously, so the more sensory an experience, the more engaging it will be. Hultén (2011) gives a more precise idea of the effects by determining them for every sense: smell/scents contribute to the creation of memory pictures, a positive atmosphere and wellbeing among customers and employees and a positive impact on customers' emotional state and mood. Sound brings meaning to the brand whereas touch strengthens brand's identity and image through a physical and psychological interaction with customers. Finally, taste represents everything: how the brand looks, smells, feels and sounds. Since Aristotle, five senses are considered: hearing, sight, touch, taste and smell. This classification only takes into account an anatomic vision of perception: the hand, the eyes, the mouth, the nose and the ears, and this classification has some limits.

First, the hand doesn't cover the total touch sensations: the skin, organs, muscles, articulations. Second, the mouth not only arouses the taste sense but also the smell, the touch, the sound. Thus, a more detailed analysis of the senses physiology leads to a more complete approach of the senses.

1. Visual Marketing:

Comparing all the senses, vision is generally described as being the most important. Indeed, responding times of the visual system are very short, and it is mainly due to visual information that animals and humans chose their food, recognize their kind, judge the danger of a situation. Thus, vision is over all the senses. We trust more our eyes rather than our other sensitive organs, and in case of doubt, the vision is more important than the rest. Recreation industry usually make

use of the visual marketing in appropriate presentation and layouts at various places to attract the target audience. It can be the way like arranging a promotional event, having various stalls about particular product and making the individuals aware about the product. Best examples are various shows which occur at various festivals for the product promotions. Screens and hoardings at appropriate places to draw the attention of the customers.

2. Sound Marketing

As stated earlier, sound- with vision- is one of the most used senses. Lindström (2010) High lights the importance of considering that hearing is passive and listening, active, adding that traditionally, sound has focused on appealing to customer's hearing, at the expense of their listening capabilities- which can actually influence purchasing decisions. For example if there is smooth music playing at the background of any of the play area or restaurant, it can affect the buying decision of the consumer. If they feel more relaxed they may spend more time at a particular place. This may enhance their buying behaviour in terms of entertainment ,food and drinks. If we take example of some places like 4XD cinemas and other theme parks where sound plays an important role in attracting the customers towards it.Music allows professionals capturing the customers' attention as it is directly linked to memories, emotions, other times, places and experiences. For a brand, music can link the customers to a product or company: it increases the retention of information as it is strongly linked with the product or brand. Clow and Baack, (2010) say that individuals asked to compare ads without music to ads with music almost always rated those with music higher in terms of persuasiveness. Music's main objective is to reinforce the brand identity and have influence on the perception of time of the customers (Giboreau, Body, 2012).In case of music it totally depends on the perception of consumers. It has been observed that some consumers are motivated with high music and it enhance their buying behavior. They feel energetic and are likely to spend more, on the contrary some of the customers are getting irritated with high sound and they immediately leave the place. So music marketing has both positive and negative consequences or impacts on the buying behavior.

3. Smell Marketing

According to Lindstöm (2010), less than 6% of the Fortune Top 1000 brands have just briefly thought about establishing a distinct aroma even if the Brand Sense study indicates that

smell is by far, the most persuasive sense. It is the only one sense you can't turn off and is also extraordinarily powerful in evoking memory. The management of odors remains difficult to use because of its wide diversity between individuals, in terms of perception and appreciation. For instance if you visit various international food joints like Coasta or Tim Hortons, the smell of freshly grounded coffee can bring a relaxing feeling to consumers. Some companies like Starbucks also installed refreshers in some stores to spread a good smell and at some places employees are forbidden to wear perfumes to not to interfere with the natural fragrance of copy.

4. Touch Marketing

For taste marketing also giving the example of Starbucks offers his customers real cups, not paper-made, when consuming on-site. Also, the stores are always very clean and the nice seats and sofas invite customers to sit. On another hand, the merchandising is left available to people to touch it and it allows them to imagine using it. Further if we observe in case of some places where they are kids friendly like Dubai resorts and parks, IMG world, Warner Bros Studios and most popular Disney Land at all locations. At all these place a proper care is taken in terms of cleanliness and hygiene. Further in terms of Touch marketing previous researches proved that feeling a product or place motivates people to be there or purchase the marketed products.

5. Taste Marketing

Taste is one of the prominent sensation which has the highest impact on the decision of the consumer and governs the consumer behavior to greatest possible extent. Usually taste marketing works in terms of food and beverage industry. Crispy and tasty burgers from Mc Donalds or Burger king always maintains the same authentic taste. Various fine dine cuisines are also famous for their authentic traditional food. In any locations across the world these cuisines maintain there taste consistently. Proper care is taken in raw materials and preparations as well. Authentic and consistent taste can only improve the customer satisfaction

3. Methodology

3.1 Design and measurement

Cross sectional study design with a mixed approach was used in this study. The primary data was collected through a structured questionnaire. This questionnaire comprised of demographic profile of the respondents and overall impact of sensory marketing on their buying behavior. The reliability of each dimension was tested using Cronbach's alpha. In this study, the linear regression analysis was conducted using the Overall impact of Sensory Marketing on buying behavior(I) as the dependent variable and the five senses of Sensory Marketing as independent variables. The relationship between the independent and dependent variables in the regression model can be represented as follows:

$$Y = b_0 + b_1X_1 + b_2X_2 + b_3X_3 + b_4X_4 + b_5X_5 + \text{error}$$

Where

Y is the Overall Impact on buying behavior due to Sensory Marketing (S), b_0, b_1, \dots, b_5 are parameters, X_1 is impact of vision(V), X_2 is impact of touch (To), X_3 is impact of smell (S), X_4 is impact of Sound(S) X_5 is impact of taste (Ta)

3.2 Hypothesis

The study concentrates on various attributes of Sensory Marketing that have positive impact on Customers. In this backdrop, the following hypothesis statements were formulated in consistent with the literature review which provides the scope and depth of the study.

H01: Customers are not affected by the sense of vision while buying.

H02: Customers are not affected by the sense of touch while buying.

H03: Customers are not affected by the sense of smell while buying

H04: Customers are not affected by the sense of taste while buying

H05: Customers are not affected by the sense of sound while buying

H06: Age groups and senses of sensory marketing are independent of each other

3.3 Questionnaire design and data

The primary data for the study was collected using structured questionnaires from the individuals across the region. The questionnaire consisted of the demographic profile of the customers and the questions related to impact of sensory marketing. The respondents were asked to indicate the degree of satisfaction on various implication of chaos theory in their banks using five point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree 5 = strongly agree). Descriptive and inferential statistics has been applied in data analysis. Statistical we made use of excel to find out the descriptive statistics and to develop a multivariate regression model. And Chi-square model as well. Questionnaire was well designed and structured and met all the aspects of the purpose of the study. The reliability of the survey instrument is tested with the help of Cronbach's alpha method. The reliability test checks whether or not the respondents' score on each attributes tend to be related to their scores on the other attributes (Bryman and Bell, 2007). As a general rule, an alpha coefficient greater than or equal to 0.75 is considered acceptable and a good indication of construct reliability (Nunnally, 1978). The Cronbach's alpha for survey questions of this study is 0.82 which proves that the survey instrument is valid and reliable indicating excellent overall internal consistency.

3.4 Demographic profile of sample data

Primary data: Structured questionnaire

Secondary data: Obtained from online journals and magazines.

Sampling method 'Snowball' (Morgan, 2008; Malhotra, 1999; Tuncalp, 1988).

Data collection: Questionnaires were sent via email and also distributed personally to nearly 750 respondents.

Response rate: 150 response were obtained

Yielding a response rate of 20%

3.5.1 Regression Statistics (Table-1)

Regression Statistics							
Multiple R	0.58369186						
R Square	0.34069619						
AdjustR-square	0.3178037						
Standard Error	0.227793						
Observations	150						
ANOVA							
	df	SS	MS	F	Significance F		
Regression	5	3.86122347	0.772245	14.88244	9.19245E-12		
Residual	144	7.472109863	0.05189				
Total	149	11.33333333					
	Coefficients	Standard Error	t Stat	P-value	Lower 95%	Upper 95%	Lower 95.0%
Intercept	1.14340101	0.635690394	1.798676	0.074164	-0.11308878	2.39989079	-0.11308878
(Vision)	-0.0531751	0.058283045	-0.91236	0.363104	-0.16837594	0.06202569	-0.16837594
(Taste)	0.31092608	0.087640631	3.547739	0.000525	0.137697791	0.48415436	0.137697791
(Smell)	0.20586908	0.051334328	4.010359	9.7E-05	0.104402927	0.30733523	0.104402927
(Touch)	0.03212449	0.065719017	0.488816	0.625716	-0.09777408	0.16202306	-0.09777408
(Sound)	0.27438279	0.082273148	3.335022	0.001085	0.111763739	0.43700185	0.111763739

3.5.2 Chi-Square Statistic

Based on our hypothesis to test the dependency of the senses on the age groups chi-square test would be the best fit.

Chi-Square Test							
		Sensory Marketing					
	Smell	Vision	Touch	Sound	Taste	Total	
Age	Observed Frequency						
15-19	15	5	20	5	5	50	0.333333
20-29	5	15	10	10	4	44	0.293333
30-39	6	4	5	5	3	23	0.153333
40-49	5	4	5	2	1	17	0.113333
50-59	2	2	4	4	4	16	0.106667
Total	33	30	44	26	17	150	

	Expected Frequency						
	11	10	14.66667	8.666667	5.666667		
	9.68	8.8	12.90667	7.626667	4.986667		
	5.06	4.6	6.746667	3.986667	2.606667		
	3.74	3.4	4.986667	2.946667	1.926667		
	3.52	3.2	4.693333	2.773333	1.813333		
	P-value		0.05				
	Test Statistics		0.129743				

4.1 Interpretations:

Table above provides model summary of the regression model which indicates the customer satisfaction as a function of service quality dimensions. The R value (0.58) presented in the model summary table indicates positive correlation among all five attributes under study. The R2 (0.34) value indicates how much of the total variation in the dependent variable (overall satisfaction) is being explained by the independent variables. In this study, R2 is 0.34, indicating that 34% of the variations in the overall impact on customer’s buying behavior are explained by five different senses of sensory marketing. Results of the ANOVA also show that the regression model predicts the dependent variable significantly well. F-statistics state that the overall model is highly significant and a good fit at the 5% level ($0.00 \leq 0.05$) of significance, indicating that the model is significantly having positive impact on buying behavior of the customer.

The multivariate regression model can be written as:

$$\text{Overall impact on Buying Behavior} = 2.213 + (-0.05) (V) + (0.31) (T) + 0.20(S) + 0.03(To) + 0.27(So)+\text{Error}$$

As observed in the above multivariate regression model, only vision seems to have negative impact on buying behavior of consumers. Further some considering all other variables understudy including Touch, Taste, Smell and Sound had positive impact on the Consumer buying behavior. As observed from the result above from Table-2, we conclude that **at 5% level** of significance chi-square value will be 0.129. Finally, we conclude that there is no sufficient evidence to accept Ho. We reject H06 and accept the alternative hypothesis. Age and type of sense both are dependent on each other.

4.2 Conclusion and Recommendation:

In this paper, an attempt has been made to investigate the impact of sensory marketing on buying behavior of consumers. The results of regression analysis indicate that out of 5 attributes of Sensory Marketing, 4 of them have a positively significant effect on the overall customer satisfaction. The results of the study have significant implications to understand the pattern of customer buying behavior pertaining to various senses. Chi-square model also suggested that age group and various senses are dependent on each other.

4.3 Limitation of the Study

The time frame and the sample size of the study were limited. The study considered five attributes of Sensory Marketing and also assigned equal weights for these dimensions. After observing the results, it was realized that taking more attributes under study can improve the accuracy of the model, which can be done by including various other types of marketing impacts along with sensory marketing. One more issue which was faced was the response rate. Out of 750 questionnaires sent through various modes, turn up ratio was only 20%.

4.4. Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

5.References

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