



Sensory Marketing for the Omnichannel Consumer Experience: Benefits and Ways Forward

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Abstract. Human senses play a critical role in individual experiences in the process of decision-making, purchasing, and consumption. Consumer perceptions about products and services are also constructed through the five senses. However, it often goes unnoticed as a marketing strategy. Sensory marketing, which is a marketing strategy that utilizes the five senses, provides important opportunities and contributions for brands to improve marketing outcomes such as attitude creation, referral, and purchasing decisions. Sensory marketing in the offline (brick-and-mortar) context can be realized directly through stimulation that triggers the visual, auditory, tactile, olfactory, and taste senses. Meanwhile, in the online context, marketers still need strategies and creative ways to optimize the use of the five sensory channels. This research which applied a descriptive method probes to explore the advantages and ways forward to sensory marketing, especially through online and digital contexts, in an effort to build an omnichannel consumer experience. Academic research related to sensory marketing in online and digital contexts is still limited. In practice, sensory stimulus such as attractive images and informative copywriting narratives are often used in online and digital content because they have the power to 'turn on' products. This research is expected to contribute to the study of sensory marketing in the online and digital context and also become input for marketers in designing sensory-based marketing strategies for omnichannel consumers.

Keywords: sensory marketing, omnichannel consumers, online experience, sensory stimuli, five senses

1 Introduction

The global condition of COVID-19 forces everyone to adapt digitally to be in line with the needs of omnichannel consumers. Consumer behavior and preferences have changed a lot since the pandemic; one of the significant changes is the high interest in online shopping. The COVID 19 pandemic forced brands to revisit their strategies of marketing as, when the recovery phase occurs at this time, there are many things that marketers must maintain. Not only should marketers rely on buzzwords, but they also need to return to the original and fundamental way of appealing to consumers' five senses.

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The consumer's experience of products and services is shaped by the five senses (sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch). According to Platon, O.E. (2021), human senses are tools for them to react and interpret their environment which eventually will determine their experiences toward the environment. This explanation shows how consumers see and hear products and services and react to taste, smell, and touch can influence how they think, feel, and act towards them. For marketers, understanding how a lack of sensory stimuli can impact consumer perceptions and behavior is very important.

Most consumers make decisions using their five senses. Marketing strategies that involve the five senses, namely sensory marketing, can present numerous chances for brands to strengthen their marketing objectives, follow up on consumer insights, and generate promotional materials capable of attracting customers at this time. Every interaction a consumer has with a brand occurs through five sensory channels: visual, auditory, haptic, olfactory, and gestural, all of which contribute to three crucial parts of marketing outcomes: attitude formation, word-of-mouth, and purchase decision (Algharabat, Raed, 2017).

Sensory marketing can be understood as the way in which companies, through various sensory strategies and expressions of taste, may raise brand recognition and develop a brand image based on the customer's personal identity, lifestyle, and character. Because consumers at this time, not only see the brand from the attributes and features of the product it has, but also see the brand as an experience that mostly involves emotions. The consumer experience in the omnichannel, or what is known as the multimedia experience or omnichannel refers to the consumer's perception of the company's integrated communication channels (Lisnawati, 2021).

In the conventional context, sensory marketing is associated with involving consumers and building consumer experiences in offline (brick-and-mortar) stores. The concept of sensory marketing in brick-and-mortar can be realized directly through stimulation that triggers the visual, auditory, tactile, olfactory, and taste senses. Meanwhile, on the other hand, consumer activity in buying and consuming products and services online has increased. The challenge now is how sensory marketing that involves the five senses can be applied by brands in an online or digital context. So that both channels (both offline and online/digital) are connected seamlessly and consumers feel they are shopping in one store and have a satisfying experience on each integrated channel (omnichannel).

Sensory elements that tend to be widely used in online environments or digital contexts are visual and auditory, which create tangibility in products that consumers cannot touch and feel (Kaushik & Gokhale, 2021). But current trends show that a number of brands have realized the importance of utilizing five sensory channels (not just visual and auditory) in online interactions. Marketers and researchers need to pay more attention and find creative ways related to tools and technology that can

optimize the sensory marketing usages in an effort to establish an online experience for omnichannel consumers.

For this reason, this article attempts to examine how marketing personnels can use a sensory marketing in virtual contexts and discover new channels to optimize the five senses to attract omnichannel consumers. That sensory element, apart from image and sound, also has important benefits for customer engagement and marketing outcomes.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Sensory Marketing. Human senses play a very important role in the experiences of individuals in the processes of decision-making, purchasing, and consumption. However, it often goes unnoticed as a marketing strategy. Consumer perceptions of products, services, brands, and companies are also built through the five senses (Hultén, B., Broweus, N., & van Dijk, M., 2009). The growing interest in sensory marketing among practitioners, consultants, and researchers is driving greater attention to marketing strategies that involve the five senses (B. H. Schmitt, 2003).

The company's marketing initiatives, which stress the production and delivery of sensory experiences, center on the human senses. This enables businesses to more thoroughly communicate their brand identity and values to individuals. Sensory marketing, in which the five human senses engage with a brand, can improve the purchasing and consumption experience (Hulten, B., 2009).

Previous research by Petit et al. (2019) explained that companies can be more creative in building online experiences for their consumers thanks to the technology available today. Therefore, when a company introduces technology into its organization, it will be able to create a competitive advantage in the online marketplace. In line with Krisna (2012), who argues that consumer experience is formed by sensory input, which influences consumer behavior and judgment.

Due to the primary standard is the individual's brain, sensory marketing is neither comparable to or equivalent to mass marketing or relationship marketing. Sensory marketing is founded on the notion that a corporation must reach out to the five human senses on a more personal level (than mass or relationship marketing can). Sensory marketing is concerned with how a firm treats its clients, specifically how to 'meet' individuals directly through mutual channels such as dialogue, engagement, multi-platform communication, and digital technology. The primary purpose of sensory marketing is to deliver messages directly to the consumer's brain in order to pique their attention, entice them to purchase specific items or services, and forge ties between customers and products or services (Costa et al., 2012).

1. Sense of Sight/Visual Factor

Vision plays an important role in our lives. The sense of sight is a powerful tool in marketing and is considered the strongest sense (Dissabandara, 2019). Over 80% of communication and commercial activities are carried out using the sense of sight (Jayakrishnan, 2013). So many marketers and creative teams are designing visually appealing communication campaigns and building messages that can catch the attention and minds of consumers. Each product or service can be created attractive in sight through images, colors, creations of code, interesting packaging, etc., which are related to branding strategies (Hulten, 2013).

Meanwhile, over 90% of the information our brain receives is visual and has visual characteristics, which in many cases affect the final sale (Jiménez Marin, G., Bellido Pérez, E., & López Cortés, 2019). In addition to this, Santos (2013) also explained that color is the main attribute of brand recognition. Just as food is linked to specific feelings or music with moods, so are colors (e.g., yellow is associated with joy, green with nature, and red with passion).

Factors related to the sense of sight, such as the selection of colors and shapes in the product concept, layout, and lighting, are key success factors that need to be understood by marketers. Color and shape are the first ways to identify and differentiate (Valenti, C., & Riviere, J., 2008). Many brands are associated with certain colors, making it easier for consumers to remember.

2. Sense of Hearing/Auditory Factor

The sense of hearing also plays an important role in everyday routine. In branding and marketing, audio is recognized as a strategy to enhance brand image. When used correctly, audio and sound can help build a distinct identity for a brand (Hultén, B., Broweus, N., & van Dijk, M. 2009). Audio and sound have an influence on decision-making, influencing consumer behavior and habits as well (Lindstorm, 2005).

Hutabarat's Research, P.M. (2021), regarding sonic branding as a brand marketing strategy, explained that marketing trends show that audio, music, and sound are increasingly powerful mediums for marketers to use in this digital era. Digital sensory marketing is the key to attracting consumers at this time. Lusensky (2010) also explained that the application of audio, music, and sound is able to create a positive atmosphere and contribute to the consumer experience, which is then known as the concept of sonic branding.

Associating messages with music and sound is a good way to make consumers remember them (Valenti, C., & Riviere, J., 2008). In addition, music and sound are also important for sensory marketing, with a number of studies highlighting the impact of music on behavior, for example, at the point of sale. Music is at every point of sale or restaurant and is an integral part of the atmosphere. Background music is a manageable ambiance factor.

According to Roballey & Ali (1985) and Milliman (1986) research, fast-tempo music encourages clients to leave early. Slow music, on the other hand, played at a low volume, will add to the time and money spent on it. According to the same study, clients will eat faster and consume less if the music is loud and rapid. This implies that music provides a variety of opportunities for marketers to influence client behavior and complement the ambiance to create a cohesive experience.

3. Sense of Taste/Gustative Factor

Taste, also known as gustative factor, refers to a product's intrinsic characteristics, which are seen to be an effective way of differentiating it. Celier (2004) investigates the process of taste and its relationship to color in his research. Academics and practitioners are learning more about the four primary gustatory sensations, which consumers identify with red, green, blue, and yellow, thanks to his research. This is vital during the product package design process.

Companies frequently employ gustatory experiences to persuade clients, either through blind research (such as comparative marketing) or directly through free-tasting promotional operations. This strategy, according to Rieunier (2002), can be crucial in the food market because customers tend to buy things they already feel and appreciate.

The sense of taste (taste) is a powerful way to influence consumer behavior. Coca-Cola, for example, has created a distinct identity for itself by utilizing the sense of taste (Jayakrishnan, 2013). According to Klosse et al. (2004), the way in which food and drink are presented as intuitive expressions is very important for the taste experience. For example, restaurant owners and marketing experts can attract more customers through food descriptions. Costa et al. (2012), did their research in the restaurant industry, and drew a conclusion that customer loyalty can be achieved using a sensory marketing strategy. The sense of taste helps the customer comprehend the particular and unique value, which can make it an undisputedly memorable experience that stimulates the reproduction and extension of that experience, regardless of the product price.

4. Sense of Smell/Olfactory

Studies by Lindstrom (2005), 75% of our emotions is the product of our sense of smell. It can be an explanation of why the commercial use of fragrances is increasing every day. The employment of artificial aromas to entice clients is the most well-known marketing practice utilizing the sense of smell in the food sector. The olfactory field research in perception is still very limited compared to research on other senses. According to Diaz (2012), regarding marketing through the sense of smell, humans remember 35% of what we smell. Studies related to neuromarketing also confirm that 75% of our emotions are related to smells, so smells tend to influence consumer behavior (Jiménez-Marin, 2016).

Smell and memory are inextricably linked (Krishna, 2012). Olfactory marketing is still a very new technology, but it has generated a lot of interest throughout the world in maximizing olfactory marketing to leave memories in the brains of consumers. Walt Disney was a pioneer in adopting olfactory marketing, scenting his amusement parks with freshly cooked popcorn. According to Jiménez-Marn (2016), two properties of scent play a role in evaluating its usage in marketing through the sense of smell: enjoyment and compatibility. Pleasure captures the fundamental sense of aromas, whereas appropriateness associates smells with settings such as shops, products, or brands.

5. Senses of Touch/Tactile factor

The sense of touch supports brand identity because it involves customer interaction with the product. Touch can be used to influence consumers' subconscious impressions, feelings, and preferences (Lobato, 2005). Touch marketing relates to product quality (such as texture, size, material, and others) as well as the point of sale (Jimenez-Marin, 2019).

Sensory strategy through touch aims to empower a brand's identity and image. The tactile encounter is facilitated via sensory expressions such as material shapes and surfaces illustrated by their coating, but also through temperature, weight, shape, and stability. As an example in the garment and furniture industries. Likewise, the tactile technology used in virtual settings results in ease of use for customers (Hulten, B. 2011).

Omnichannel Consumer Experience. Omnichannel is the unification of several communication channels and strategies so that they complement each other to provide what consumers need (Lisnawati, 2021). Omnichannel comes from the Latin word *omnis*, which means all or universal. So the dimensions that make up the consumer experience must incorporate both online and offline interactions. According to K.N. Lemon and P.C. Verhoef (2016), customer experience on omnichannel is a cognitive, emotional, behavioral, sensory, and social response to what a company or brand has to offer during the entire consumer buying journey.

The omnichannel consumer experience differs from the traditional consumer experience. When assessing the efficacy of the omnichannel consumer experience, two components stand out: online and offline. According to Lisnawati (2021), consumer experience is formed when consumers receive sensations or knowledge resulting from several levels of interaction created by service providers. The sensations and knowledge obtained will be automatically stored in the consumer's memory.

3 Materials & Methods

This study employs a descriptive technique to discuss sensory marketing in the omnichannel customer experience and investigates how brands might maximize the senses to attract omnichannel consumers, particularly in online and digital environments. Research using a descriptive method has no aim to examine hypotheses, but rather describes them methodically, probing for accurate and careful links (Rakhmat and Ibrahim, 2016). Furthermore, the author collected data for this study through a series of observations, attentive reading, careful selecting, and analyzing journal papers, reference books, previous research reports, and news connected to sensory marketing and omnichannel consumer experience.

4 RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Benefits of Sensory Marketing. Sensory marketing has an essential contribution to make in strengthening customer relationships, acquiring competitive advantages, and being beneficial in omnichannel marketing. Sensory marketing strategies help intensify the relationship between consumers and brands through individual emotions and experiences. Therefore, marketers need to choose the right stimuli in order to generate a positive response from consumers towards the products and services offered by the brand.

In addition, the sensory marketing strategy provides a definite competitive advantage. This strategy is an ideal way to differentiate yourself from competitors and gain a place in the consumers' minds. Likewise, helping in efforts to strengthen brand awareness in the market. It is proven that marketing campaigns that intrinsically utilize a sensory approach will remain in the consumer's memory. As a result, this sensory marketing strategy has left an impression on the behavior of the customer and their processes in making decisions.

Sensory marketing also adapts well to omnichannel marketing, namely how brands are able to send their messages through physical and digital channels by optimizing the human sense approach. Through sensory marketing, brands can increase consumers perceived value while reaching a wider audience. Thus strengthening the brand's control over its brand image.

Ways Forward in Sensory Marketing for Omnichannel Consumer Experience

Engaging the five senses is a strategy for capturing the hearts and minds of audiences. The challenge comes when implementing sensory experiences online. Based on the author's review of the literature, marketers can design and present visuals, as well as employ emotional language, to evoke mental imagery of a product's texture, smell, and even taste. Online content is recognized as having the power to 'turn on' products by using attractive images and copywriting narratives that are informative and arouse consumers (Law, Ven Yong 2022).

One example is when deciding on a place to eat or restaurant, where consumers turn to the web to see reviews and views as well as information about the restaurant. It is not just about satisfying hunger anymore; it is about whether a restaurant can create a memorable dining experience, and the answers can be found online. An increasingly popular technique we see is digital menus, which involve searching for food. For the visual generation consumer, they are looking for a menu that offers taste and style; they tend to prefer to see what they order rather than just reading the description of the dish.

In addition, in the online or digital context, we often hear and find audio or voice stimuli. The things we often hear will be able to create a sense of familiarity. More and more brands have "audio" signs, or what is currently called sonic branding, to accompany the visual identity of a brand. According to Hutabarat, P. et al. (2021), sonic branding is not just a jingle. But audio, sound, or music that is able to provide an experience for consumers on every platform so as to build connectivity with the audience wherever they hear it. For example, when we listen to sonic brands such as Netflix's "ta-dum", iconic audio "Intel Inside" and audio identities from e-commerce sites Tokopedia, Shopee, Blibli, and other brands.

The sense of touch in branding has also long been recognized for its benefits, but this sensory feature of communication has only recently spread to the digital landscape. Technological developments related to haptics, sensors, and touch represent technological opportunities to develop and improve interactions in touch communication. Haptic touch technology allows consumers to interact with advertisements (advertisements), for example, by shaking, tilting, and swiping the phone to add products to the consumer's cart and skip advertisement videos. To drive online conversions, brands may explore adopting multi-gesture apps and touch commands such as swipe and long press.

Meanwhile, customers' concentration spans are getting shorter. Marketers' efforts to appeal to consumers' visual senses are becoming increasingly competitive. Marketers must move beyond traditional approaches like bright colors, logos, movies, and website designs and include cutting-edge technology into their campaigns. Augmented Reality (AR) and Virtual Reality (VR) are gaining popularity because they provide users complete control over the interaction for the first time. This contributes to brand-consumer trust, which is especially crucial during the "try before you buy" period.

Then, in sensory marketing, which employs the sense of smell (smell) in an online or digital context, marketers can develop and show pictures, as well as use emotive language, to elicit mental imagery of texture, smell, and even taste. For example, from videos showing the aroma of freshly baked bread to videos of brewing coffee on Instagram, our bodies and minds are programmed to react to our senses.

5 Conclusions

Utilization of sensory stimuli as a marketing approach will further assist marketing communication efforts in the present and in the future. Where omnichannel consumers can have a memorable and harmonious experience, both on offline and online channels. Marketers no longer only focus on sensory experiences in physical or offline stores but also creatively develop their marketing strategies in online or digital stores. So that consumers can feel the integration and unity in customer communication on offline and online channels.

Through a literature review conducted by the author, it is also known that sensory marketing can be optimized in an online or digital context as well as in an offline context. If so far marketers have focused more on the visual and auditory senses in the online context, now and in the future marketers can also start using stimuli for the senses of touch, smell, and taste in the online context. This can be done through interesting copywriting narratives as well as by using artificial intelligence, virtual reality, and augmented reality technologies, which can be integrated in an effort to build multi-sensory experiences and improve consumer experiences.

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