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## **TOWARDS THE SENSORY MARKETING: STIMULATING THE FIVE SENSES (SIGHT, HEARING, SMELL, TOUCH AND TASTE) AND ITS IMPACT ON CONSUMER BEHAVIOR**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Current development of sensory marketing indicates the emergence of a new era in the field of marketing : an era in which the five senses of consumers will be the focus of marketing strategies and techniques. That's why marketers, free from mass marketing and advertising practices, use new, stimulating and innovative procedures to impact and influence the customers. This paper introduces sensory marketing as a new paradigm in the field of marketing; attention to the five senses (sight, smell, hearing, taste, touch) and the effect of these senses on consumer behavior are studied. The statistical population consisted of 234 customers in a multi-purpose shopping center in Tabriz and they were chosen by random sampling. For collecting data, we used a questionnaire whose reliability was 0.838. Our findings indicate that the five senses simultaneously affect consumer behavior. Stimulating the senses of sight, smell, hearing, touch and taste also affect consumer behavior. Thus, the results indicate that strategic stimulation of the senses of the consumer in marketing process can be one of the practical methods of companies and retailers to attract customers and increase their loyalty.

**Keywords:** *Sensory Marketing, Five Senses, Consumer Behavior, Emotion, Sensory Experience*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Human senses, experiences and emotions of consumers are emerging as important marketing paradigm and an alternative main phenomenon (Achrol and Kotler, 2010). To accept and cooperate with the mentioned changes, marketers all around the world developed the marketing ways based on human emotion (kotler et al. 2011). Feelings impact on various parameters such as priority and selection of retail marketing, store files, the time spent in the store, shopping satisfaction, satisfaction with a product or service, pleasure seeking and consumption-oriented shopping, consumer decision-making styles and the desire and interest rates of the consumer (Haghigi et al. 2010). Many consumers use the products based on feelings, mental images and emotions that products make on them (Moun and Minor, 1992). During the recent years, the role of sensory experience in judging and deciding, in a wave of interest in marketing, is expressed as sensory marketing. There have been some researches concerning the role of the scattered senses on consumer behavior (Krishna and Schwarz, 2014). Sensory marketing involves senses of consumer and affects their perception, judgment and behavior (Krishna, 2012). Purpose of Sensory marketing is to send messages to the right hemisphere of the brain, stimulation of the consumer senses, and finally creating a bond between customer and product and inducing induce him to purchase (Costa et al. 2012). The essential difference between emotion and reason is that human beings act based on emotion and conclude based on the reason (kotler et al. 2011). In fact, the consumer visualizes using the product or service and evaluates the final emotions (Hawkins et al. 1996). Using the unconscious sensory stimuli in sensory marketing can be an effective way to engage consumers and their behavior and affect their perception. As much as stimulants, in association with five senses, are in harmony and have high stimulating power, they will have more affect on the audience and customer (Hulten et al. 2012). The

### **Research Article**

precise and correct understanding of these sensory stimuli indicates that favorable impressions of sensation and perception in consumer behavior are applied, and this suggests the sensory marketing research perspective (Krishna, 2012). Unlike mass and relationship marketing theories, sensory marketing focuses its attention on achieving a sublime sensory experience (Hulten et al. 2012). Sensory approach is based on a bilateral interaction in real time and immediately causes a sensory experience and thus looks for a deeper, long-term relationship with the consumer (Smilansky, 2000). In the present era, all over the world in which a wide range of communication has been possible through media, presence of sensory and interactive multimedia, all the features and benefits of the products, brand name and other accessories to attract the attention of consumers are not enough. Companies that have a good interaction with consumers and customers, they provide them with a memorable sensory experience that leads to the formation of proper position of company, the products or services in the customers' mind (Schmitt and Simonson, 1997). It is noteworthy that the relationship-centered commercials can only focus on what we see and listen to, but they do not have any effect on three other senses (Lindstrom, 2007). That is why over the past decade major businesses and brands have spent a large portion of their advertising dollars in new advertising styles far different from traditional forms (Heitzler et al. 2008). They have used innovative techniques in advertising and marketing to connect with their consumers. In the current era, increased attention to the five human senses in the marketing process suggests that companies should be aware of the inner process of consumer in purchasing. Vendors not only faced the specific challenges of understanding and predicting the feelings and experiences of consumers, but also they should shape the media stores and services, foster good feelings and eliminate unwanted and undesirable emotions (Munshi and Hanji, 2013). Our main goals in this paper is to show that through sensory marketing, rooted in human five senses, we can have influential affect on the consumer behavior.

### **The importance of the five senses in the Sensory Marketing**

Touching, tasting, hearing, smelling and seeing a product plays an important role in our understanding. Perception of these roles has a valuable advantage in the market today. These senses are image of our daily lives, and by using them we satisfy our needs and desires. Recently, behavioral economists have started addressing these needs through sensory marketing which is usually associated with a favorable emotional response to make a change in the shopping behavior (Yoon and Park, 2011). Sensory Marketing, as a marketing-oriented experience, is one of the innovative solutions that give the consumer opportunities to percept and experience the product and services (Heitzler et al. 2008). The color and shape of a product or atmosphere released odor, efficient song, being free in touching and tasting the delicious food products, with different effects, motivate the consumer behavior. Various environmental stimuli in the store, by stimulating the senses of sight (color, shape, and size), sound (music), smell (odor) and touch (softness, temperature) will affect consumer behavior (Farias et al. 2014). Also sensory cues such as color, light, music and smell in the store atmosphere has a positive effect on customer reactions (Spangenberg et al. 1996). Tourly and Milliman (2000) in their study concluded that the five sensory stimuli in the environment of the store has positive effect on shopping intention, time understanding, going back, mood, time, satisfaction, spent money, product involvement, enjoyment and arousal. Sensory marketing is trying to create the perfect sensory stimuli and achieve the greatest impact on buying behavior of consumer.

- Based on the above discussion, the main hypothesis proposes that the five senses can affect consumer behavior.

### **Sight in Sensory Marketing**

Sight is dominant sensory system and the strongest sense used in marketing. More than 80% of the commercial and shopping communications are done through the sight sense (Jayakrishnan, 2013).

### **Research Article**

Therefore, it is a long time that creative managers try to make a visually appealing images and messages understandable by the consumer. Logos, colors, packaging and designing product are examples of visual stimuli that can be part of any brand strategy (Hulten, 2013). Color produces different reactions (biological, psychological, and draw attention to an object) in people (Farias et al. 2014) and has certain mental impact on customers. Significant factors such as logos, packaging, color, design and attractive shape can be a strategic approach to strengthen and make the desired image of a product in consumers' minds (Hulten et al. 2012). Sight stimuli may also have an emotional response besides drawing attention (Hulten, 2013). Based on the above discussion, the first hypothesis proposes that stimulating sight perception influence consumer behavior. It is also significant to note that consumers, without access to other information, positively or negatively, are affected by the sight stimuli and in addition to being attracted by them, they show emotional response.

- Based on the above discussion, the first hypothesis proposes that visual perception stimulate influence consumer behavior.

### **Smell in Sensory Marketing**

You can close your eyes, cover your ears, do not call and refuse to taste, but the smell is part of an air that you breathe (Lindstrom, 2005). The sense of smell involves 45% communication with the brand (Kotler and Lindstrom, 2005). The sense of smell is very close to our emotions and behavior and it has great influence on our behavior (Mahmoudi et al. 2012). It is clear that many retailers believe that the odor and smell can have a positive impact on customer behavior (Bone and Ellen, 1999). Stores, which use conditioning smells, can be better assessed by the consumers. Good smell triggers memory and is effective in justifying the added value of goods. In a research conducted by Krishna et al (2010), they come to this result that in long-term effect of smell causes more fragrant memory and an aromatic object is much attractive than non- aromatic one. In another study by Chebat and Michon (2003) conducted in a shopping center, they concluded that the odor directly affects the impression of buyers and has a considerable influence on consumers' behaviors. Also, smell and odor significantly impact on perceptions of product quality and environment. Increasing attention to using the odor allows the sellers to look at using odor strategically in the competitive environment (Bone and Ellen, 1999).

- Based on the above discussion, the second hypothesis proposes that stimulating the smell sense affects the consumer behavior.

### **Hearing in Sensory Marketing**

Sound has long been recognized as an important driver of positive effects on mood, preferences and consumer behavior (Alpert et al. 2005). Hearing share in relating to brand building is 41% (Kotler and Lindstrom, 2005). The sound can be used as an efficient tool for communicating with the unconscious needs of the consumer. It affects on our shopping habits (Lindstrom, 2005). In addition, Hui and Dube (1997) in their study of music in a retail environment showed that music in store leads to positive emotions in consumer and understanding of music causes a positive approach to the store. Other studies show that store music can be effective in increasing sales (Matilla and Wirtz, 2001) and influence on purchase intentions (Baker et al. 2002). In a study by Vida (2008) on consumer irritation hearing, they determined that the perception of music has positive results in the consumer experience and after the evaluation of store, the goods seems desirable and finally much more time and money are spend in the store. The findings confirmed that the right music can affect the behavior of buyers. Based on the above discussion, the third hypothesis proposes that stimulating the sense of hearing can affect consumer behavior.

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## **Research Article**

### **Touching in Sensory Marketing**

Touch is the largest sensory organ of the body and it is symbol of physical contact through the skin. Touch sense associated with brand building has 25% share (Kotler and Lindstrom, 2005). By touching the products, customer behavior and shopping attitude is positively affected (Peck and Wiggins, 2006). Reading Peck and Wiggins (2006) suggests that the touching the touch-screen electronic products encourages shoppers to interact with the products. One reason could be the fact that the eye alone is not enough to judge products like computers or mobile phones (Hulten, 2013). Material, temperature, weight and shape impact positively on touch experience and enhance customer loyalty (Rodrigues et al. 2011). Hulten (2013) in his study concluded that using visual and auditory sensory cues influences customer's attention and makes customer buying behavior to have a positive correlation with touching the products. This means that if sensory stimuli make customer closer to products, he/she will probably touch it.

- Based on the above discussion, the fourth hypothesis proposes that stimulating the touch sense affects on consumer behavior.

### **Taste in Sensory Marketing**

Flavors associated with brand building has 31 % share (Kotler and Lindstrom, 2005). In situations where there is fierce competition among the marketers of food products, using an intuitive expression of good taste is an effective way to influence consumer behavior. It should be significant for companies that using marketing through the palate, the can be persuasive for the consumer. In this regard, Coca-Cola is one of the brands that has had a unique identity for itself using the taste (Jayakrishnan, 2013). Providing and the way of serving the food and beverages as intuitive expression are important for taste experience (Klosse et al. 2004). Restaurant owners and marketing experts can attract more customers through describing a food or meal with vivid names. According to the researches, this strategic process has increased 27 % of restaurants sale (Wansink et al. 2004). Costa et al (2012) in their study on restaurant industry concluded that sensory marketing, as an experience in marketing, is a strategy that aims to achieve customer's loyalty. This is done through differentiation of service and it is beyond things like color to attract the attention, smell and odor to provide calm, sound to stimulate staying in a place and taste for surprising the taste. This issue leads the customer to understand the unique value and makes him/ her a memorable experience that stimulate the replication and extension of this experience, regardless of the price.

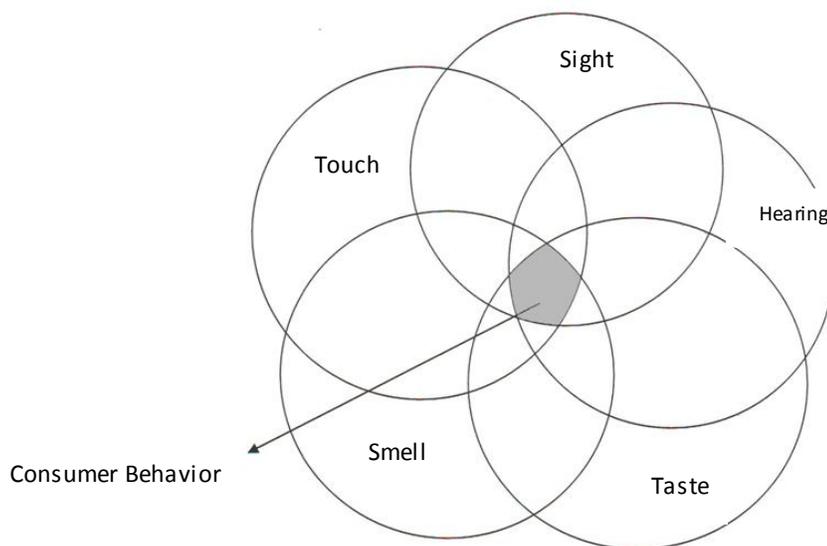
- Based on the above discussion, the fifth hypothesis proposes that stimulating the taste sense affects the consumer behavior:

The aim of this study is saying that using sensory marketing that takes advantage of human senses; we can definitely have a good affect on the customer behavior and show strategic Stimulation of consumer senses in marketing process can be applied by the companies and retailers to attract the customers and increase their loyalty.

### **Conceptual Model**

Stimulating the five senses in a marketing sense, either individual or collective, can affect consumer behavior. The conceptual model for this research was provided by Hulten et al (2012) presented in Figure 1:

This is an applied study and in terms of data collection, it is a descriptive survey. The statistical population includes customers in a shopping center in Tabriz city who were 600 ones. We choose the statistical sample, 234 people, using Morgan by random sampling method. In this study, to collect data and discover the opinion of the population study, a researcher made questionnaire of marketing sense was used. To determine the reliability of the questionnaire, Cronbach's alpha coefficient used which was 0.838. In inferential statistical methods, regression test, Freidman test, and SPSS software used to analyze the data.



**Figure 1: conceptual model derived from (Hulten et al. 2012)**

**RESULTS**

There were totally 234 subjects, 97 women (41.5%) and 137 men (58.5%). Among them, 14.5% of the sample was 15 - 25 years old and 47.9 % was 25 - 35 years old, 6/25 % was 35 - 45 years old, 6% was 45 - 55 years and 6% was 55 - 65 years old.

- The main hypothesis: five senses affect consumer behavior:

To investigate the effect of these senses on consumer behavior, we used regression test. According to Table 1, the estimated significant level 0.00 that is less than 0.05 and also calculated correlation coefficient 0.463 show that there is a direct and significant relationship between the senses and stimulating consumer behavior. According to the coefficient of determination which is 0.214, five senses can impact 21.4% on consumer behavior.

**Table 1: regression test of main hypothesis**

Adjusted determined coefficient	Coefficient of Determination	Correlation coefficient	P-Value
0.196	0.214	0.463	0.000

- First hypothesis: stimulation of sight sense affects on consumer behavior:

As Table 2 shows, the estimated significance level was 0.000 which is less than 0.05 and the calculated correlation coefficient was 0.248. It shows that there is a direct and significant relationship between consumer behavior and stimulating the sight sense. Coefficient of determination is 0.061. It means that the sight sense can impact 6.1% on consumer behavior.

**Table 2: regression test of 1<sup>st</sup> hypothesis**

Adjusted determined coefficient	Coefficient of Determination	Correlation coefficient	P-Value
0.087	0.061	0.248	0.000

- Second hypothesis: stimulating smell sense affects consumer behavior:

According to Table 3, the estimated significant level of 0.000 that is less than 0.05, and

**Research Article**

the calculated correlation coefficient 0.303, there is a direct and significant relationship between smell sense stimulation and consumer behavior. Coefficient of determination is calculated 0.092. Thus, the sense of smell impacts 9.2% of consumer behavior.

**Table 3: regression test of 3<sup>rd</sup> hypothesis**

Adjusted determined coefficient	Coefficient of Determination	Correlation coefficient	P-Value
0.088	0.092	0.303	0.000

- Third hypothesis: stimulating hearing sense affects consumer behavior:

According to Table 4, estimated significant level of 0.00 that is less than 0.05, and the calculated correlation coefficient was 0.272. It shows that there is a direct and significant relationship between consumer behavior and stimulate hearing sense. Calculated Coefficient of determination is 0.074. That is, the hearing sense affects 7.4% on consumer behavior.

**Table 4: regression test of 3<sup>rd</sup> hypothesis**

Adjusted determined coefficient	Coefficient of Determination	Correlation coefficient	P-Value
0.070	0.074	0.272	0.000

- Fourth hypothesis: stimulating the touch sense affects on consumer behavior:

According to Table 5, the estimated significant is 0.00 that is less than 0.05, and the calculated correlation coefficient is 0.342, there is a direct and significant relationship between consumer behavior and stimulating the touch sense. Here, the calculated coefficient of determination is 0.117 that affect 11.7% on consumer behavior influence.

**Table 5: regression test of 4<sup>th</sup> hypothesis**

Adjusted determined coefficient	Coefficient of Determination	Correlation coefficient	P-Value
0.113	0.117	0.342	0.000

- Fifth hypothesis: stimulation of taste affects consumer behavior:

According to Table (6), significant level was estimated 0.00 that is less than 0.05 and also because of calculated correlation coefficient (0.380), there is a direct and significant relationship between the stimulation of the taste sense and consumer behavior. Since that the coefficient of determination is 0.144, we can say that taste sense has 14.4% affect on consumer behavior.

**Table 6: regression test of 6<sup>h</sup> hypothesis**

Adjusted determined coefficient	Coefficient of Determination	Correlation coefficient	P-Value
0.140	0.144	0.380	0.000

**Friedman Test**

In this study, Friedman test has been used for prioritizing five senses in relation to their impact on consumer behavior presented in Table 7. Comparing "mean scores" of each of the five senses, it is determined that the sense of taste with an average rating of 3.56 has the highest correlation with consumer behavior and in later grades, the sense of touch with an average rating of 3.23 in second and sense of sight

### Research Article

with a mean rank of 3.15 at the third level and the hearing sense with an average rating of 2.77 in the fourth, and finally the sense of smell with an average rating of 2.30 is in fifth place.

**Table7: mean comparing the mean scores of five senses**

Senses	Taste	Touch	Sight	Hearing	Smell
The mean scores	3.56	3.23	3.15	2.77	2.30

### CONCLUSIONS

Given that today's consumers can not spend their time watching TV ads and other traditional advertising practices, marketers, by providing an enjoyable shopping experience and a transcendent sense, should spend part of their marketing budget to reach the minds and hearts of people. Despite extensive investigations, marketers have found that human senses have crucial role in their shopping experience and through strategic stimulation of these senses, consumer buying behavior will be influenced in so innovative way. Sensory marketing puts the human brain, along with its five senses, in the center of the marketing and show that companies and retailers can have a positive impact on five senses of the consumer through different senses such as color, smell, music, taste and texture.

In this regard, we examined each of the five senses. Based on the studied hypotheses, we concluded that 5 senses generally affect 21.4% on consumer behavior. Also, stimulating the sense of sight 6.1%, stimulating the sense of smell 9.2%, stimulating hearing sense 7.4%, stimulating the touch sense of 11.7% and stimulating the taste sense 14.4% impact on consumer behavior. These results were in consistent with the results of Turley & Milliman (2000), Chebat & Michon (2003), Vida (2008), Costa et al (2012), Hulten (2013) and Gaygen (2013). According to Friedman test, we found that the taste sense has the highest correlation with consumer behavior. In later grades, the sense of touch in the second, sense of sight in the third, sense of hearing and smell are in fourth and fifth places. Based on the observations in the study, most consumers mainly do shopping based on their inner desire to enjoy what they buy, and product quality was also important but in the second order. During shopping, consumers loved looking at the material and getting them in their hands, even though they did not any information about its production process. Another notable issue was the seller's way of treatment with the customer. Much more time spend in the stands that its staff was friendly and had a good treatment with the customers.

- Following the results obtained from the research, it is suggested that vendors try to achieve much more information on how to stimulate the senses of customers and find innovative ways to increase the customers' loyalty through making the shopping experience as joyful one.

- It is also suggested that companies, by adding the expression of senses in their products and using the sensory marketing practices, stimulate the senses of consumers and attract more customers to their products.

- Given that the statistical population of the study includes the customers of a shopping center in Tabriz city, it is suggested to do this research in the city and country level.

- It is recommended that sensory marketing is studied in associated with various brands.

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**Research Article**

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