

THE IMPACT OF SENSORY BRANDING (FIVE SENSES) ON CONSUMER: A CASE STUDY ON KFC (KENTUCKY FRIED CHICKEN)

SHARAFAT HUSSAIN

Operations Manager, Tausch Technologies Pvt. Ltd., Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh, India

ABSTRACT

Sensory branding is based on the idea that consumers are most likely to form, retain and revisit memory when their all five senses are engaged during the process of buying products or services. By going beyond the traditional marketing media of only sight and sound, brands are now taking advantage of all other senses to establish a stronger and longer-lasting emotional connection with consumers. This marketing strategy appeals to multiple senses and the efforts are multiplied, creating powerful brands with lasting consumer connections. This study reveals the impact of sensory branding on consumers of Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC). This study analyses all five senses applied to KFC to identify the impact of each sense on consumer. The study was conducted using survey method and respondents were the people who have eaten KFC at least once in one of the thirteen outlets in the city of Hyderabad, India. A sample of 116 respondents was taken for analysis.

The study concluded with the impact of sensory branding strategy by KFC and brings out the results, which can be adopted by marketers for the other products of same genre.

KEYWORDS: Sensory Branding, Sensorial Marketing, Branding and KFC Branding

INTRODUCTION

For many marketers (and consumers), the affectivity, perception and pleasure are more important than the price, since many products are now technically similar: they have to be differentiated in another way. Sensory branding is based on the idea that human beings most likely to form, retain and revisit memory when all five senses (taste, smell, sight, sound and touch) are engaged. Sense, as per Oxford English Dictionary, is any of the faculties, as sight, hearing, smell, taste, or touch, by which humans and animals perceive stimuli originating from outside or inside the body. Keeping marketing in perspective, marketers started using these human instincts as a strategy to sell their goods or services by creating such environment that appeals to senses at the point of sale. Kotler (1973) defined the atmosphere of point of sale as “the creation of a consumption environment that produces specific emotional effects on the person, like pleasure or excitation that can increase his possibility of buying”. He considered the creation of this atmosphere as the most important strategic way of differentiation for retailers.

As the cost of reaching consumers rises in the traditional media, competition for securing their attention increases likewise. Brands are struggling to compete in today’s crowded marketplace, strategic use of sensory information can provide a critical advantage. Sensory marketing strategy appeal to multiple senses, efforts are multiplied, creating powerful brands with lasting consumer connections. According to Lindstrom by using all the five senses “a total sensory experience would at least double, if not triple, the consumer’s ability to memorize the brand.” (Lindstrom 2005, p 23). Motive of sensory branding is to find ways to engage all consumer senses to strengthen the brand experience.

ABOUT KENTUCKY FRIED CHICKEN (KFC)

KFC (the name was originally an initialism for (Kentucky Fried Chicken) is a fast food restaurant chain that specializes in fried chicken and is headquartered in Louisville, Kentucky, United States (US). It is the world's second largest restaurant chain (as measured by sales) after McDonald's, with 18,875 outlets in 118 countries and territories as of December 2013. The company is a subsidiary of Yum! Brands, a restaurant company that also owns the Pizza Hut and Taco Bell chains.

Harland Sanders, an entrepreneur who began selling fried chicken from his roadside restaurant in Corbin, Kentucky, during the Great Depression, founded KFC. Sanders identified the potential of the restaurant franchising concept, and the first "Kentucky Fried Chicken" franchise opened in Utah in 1952. KFC popularized chicken in the fast food industry, diversifying the market by challenging the established dominance of the hamburger. By branding himself as "Colonel Sanders," Harland became a prominent figure of American cultural history, and his image remains widely used in KFC advertising. In December 2013, there were 299 KFC outlets in India. As well as the standard KFC offerings, the chain sells a chickpea burger and hot wings with chilly lemon sprinkles. A major franchise holder is QSR Brands (M) Holdings, which operated 26 outlets as of 2012. The first Indian KFC was a two-storied outlet on the fashionable Brigade Road in Bangalore in June 1995. KFC began to expand outside of Bangalore in 2004, with a localized menu that was the most extensive meat-free menu across the chain's worldwide operations. It introduced a vegetarian menu that included rice meals, wraps and side dishes and, like McDonald's, served eggless mayonnaise and sauces. UnnatVarma, marketing director of KFC India, states "The vegetarian offerings have made the brand more relevant to a larger section of consumers and that is necessary for KFC's growth." KFC also began using Indian spices and cooking techniques to localize its chicken dishes. By 2008–09, KFC operated 34 outlets in India.

IMPACT OF SENSES ON CONSUMER

Sensory branding, the idea that brands should engage consumers on a variety of touch points and it is hardly new to the market. Obviously senses play a very important role in our experience, choices of brand/products. Brand can't impart an aroma via a television set or newspaper hence it must come from the product itself. As matter of fact, the unique aroma, texture and sound has very little to do with the quality and the performance of the product. However, these components play a great role in building relationship of consumer with the product. The sensory stimulation not only attracts consumer choice but also helps distinguish a product from others. These get attached in our sensory memory and finally become a part of decision-making process and bring a way towards future brand building for a product.

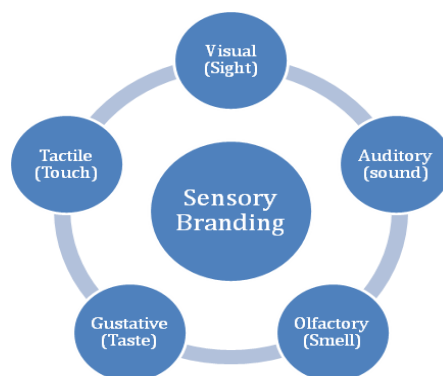


Figure 1: Sensory Branding Diagram

- **Sight (Visual):** Ever since advertising was born, it was oriented on our sight, mainly because that sense is most responsive to the environment. 92.6% of the population puts most importance on visual factors such as color and shape when buying products. We make our first impressions within 90 seconds of the initial viewing, and between 62%-92% of that impression is based on color alone. When talking about on-shelf visibility, 80% color can increase brand recognition. According to research, 42% ads in color are read more than the same ads in black and white. White is the basic colour, as it brings out everything else. White Sign of purity, cleanness and coolness. In a restaurant, white is used everywhere the customer expects for cleanness (plates, kitchen...). On a packaging, black is symbol of quality and sobriety. As it is the darkest colour, black is exclusively used to create a very specific environment. Market researchers have also determined that color affects shopping habits. With our sight we notice and recognize shapes and colors really fast, but we can't experience a brand only by looking at it, at least not at its full potential.
- **Sound (Auditory):** Human-beings are naturally sensitive to sounds and their meanings. The first sound we could hear was our mother's heartbeat. What is so great about sound is that it doesn't need our full attention to be noticed. And also it has been proven that sound evokes certain memories and experiences. Then, music has been introduced, in commercials (with the apparition of TV spots) as in the point of sales. Today, there is no point of sales without music in the background, and 99% of advertising is focused on what we see and hear. Experiments conducted in restaurants show that when music slower than rhythm of a heart beat is played, we can eat more. Audio branding is a new branch that relates only to sensory branding through sounds. Sound designers are developing audio identities for brand and that involves: audio logo, brand theme, sound scape, brand voice. Sound of a steady heartbeat, a piano, a breath were chosen as most convenient sounds for an Audi audio branding. Mercedes Benz formed a team to get the most appealing sound for a closing car door.
- **Smell (Olfactory):** Scientific studies have shown that 75 % of our emotions are generated by the smell. Humans are able to distinguish over 10,000 that are being transmitted to our olfactory system in the brain where it is closely tied to memory, mood, stress and concentration. Our sense of smell has been proven as most impressionable and responsive of our five senses, while it invokes memories and appeals directly to feelings without being filtered and analysed by the brain(as our other senses work). Smell was used a lot in real estate business, somehow houses sold better if they smelled like vanilla, fresh baked cookies or popcorn (evoking memories of early childhood. Mahogany wood, motoroil and the smell of leather were used and combined to recreate the unique smell of the 1965 Silver Cloud Rolls Royce interior. Now every Rolls Royce leaving the factory is equipped with a diffuser in the underside of the car's seat to convey this unique luxurious identity of the brand. Starbucks is one of the companies that is well aware of the power of sensory branding. Through their characteristic cozy interiors, nice Barristas and of course the smell and taste of fresh grinded coffee they occupy all of our senses. They even stopped serving breakfasts because the smell of the eggs interfered with the smell of the fresh grinded coffee.
- **Taste (Gustative):** People can sense 5 basic tastes bitter, sour, umami (savory, or meaty), salty and sweet. For all other flavor tastes we must thank to our sense of smell, for that is the one that gives flavor to our food. We can say that taste is the sense that fuses all different senses together to create a holistic brand experience, but is also linked to emotional states, so it can alter mood and brand perception. Most famous campaign that included

taste was the one made for the launch of Škoda Fabia in 2007 in London. It cost more than a real car (\$800,000). Idea was to advertise it as tasty, so they decided to bake a life-sized cake that looked like Škoda. They hired the best chocolatiers, bakers and bricklayers to construct and bake the car, and filmed the whole process. According to Škoda, in the first week of the campaign, the visits to car dealerships went up by 160 percent.

- **Touch (Tactile):** Our skin has more than 4,000,000 sensory receptors that can be easily manipulated through materials, weight, softness and comfort of the product. Haptics refers to the sense of touch (comes from the Greek word haptikos that means “I fasten onto, I touch”). Today haptics is mostly considered as a tactile feedback technology which takes advantage of the sense of touch by applying forces, vibrations, or motions to the user (we can see examples in user-interface design and product design) Haptics also plays a great role when it comes to packaging design, or even in some advertising campaigns. Packaging - and by that I mean form, material, size, weight - can give a huge impact on our brand awareness. It is a perfect way for getting close to consumer’s unconsciousness, their perceptions, feelings and tastes. Some great examples can be found is the work of conceptual designers, architects and enthusiasts.

THE STUDY

Study on 116 respondents from different age groups is done. Each responded to following statements -

- “KFC” brand is differentiable or identifiable through its taste.
- “KFC” brand is differentiable or identifiable from its Smell.
- “KFC” brand is differentiable or identifiable through seeing the logo.
- “KFC” brand is differentiable or identifiable through touching the fried chicken piece.
- “KFC” brand is differentiable or identifiable through listening the jingle/advertisement.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The objective of the study is to find or investigate the impact of sensory aspects of (five senses) “KFC” on consumer.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

As brands struggle to compete in today’s competition, strategic use of sensory information can provide a critical advantage. Before using the strategy of sensory branding it’s helpful for marketers if they have an idea about the impact of sensory aspects of brand on customer. So, my purpose of the study is to provide a view to marketers as they decide to incorporate sensory marketing strategy in their products and services.

METHODOLOGY

There were 116 respondents selected for the study. These respondents took the survey through an online survey form. These respondents were residents of Hyderabad, India. All respondents had eaten at least once in one of the 13 KFC branches in the city. While analyzing, data was divided into five elements of senses namely Sight, Smell, Taste, Sound and Touch.

ANALYSIS AND MAJOR FINDING

This part provides the empirical findings that I have gathered data for my study through questionnaires. In empirical part, I used diagrams to make the connection between the text and study conducted clearer KFC is a global brand and has entered into Indian market recently.

People giving survey might have very low brand awareness. Sample size is 116, which is very small KFC being a global brand, and limited to city of Hyderabad, India. I asked several questions to the respondents. The findings from the questionnaires are given below.

Q1. “KFC” brand is differentiable or identifiable through its taste.

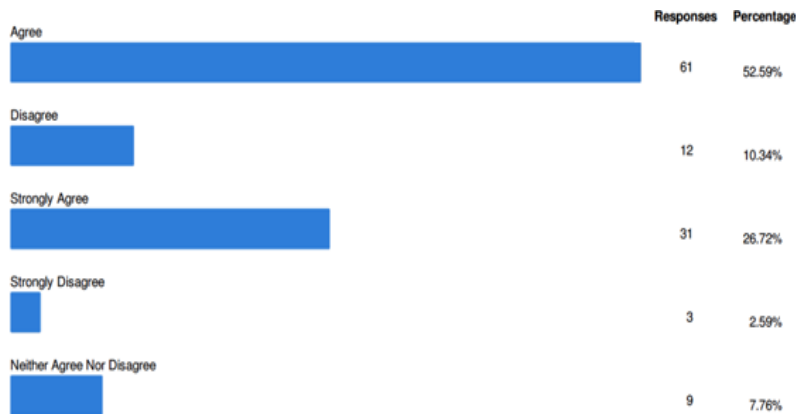


Figure 2: Identifiable through Taste

The diagram shows (Figure 2) represents the result of question asked to the respondents about the brand identity of KFC based on taste. The respondents replied, 52.59% with agree, 26.72% with strongly agree, 7.76%with neither agree nor disagree, 10.34% with disagree and 2.59%are strongly disagree with that statement.

Q2. “KFC” brand is differentiable or identifiable from its Smell.



Figure 3: Identifiable through Smell

The diagram (Figure 3) represents the result of question asked to the respondents about brand identity of KFC based on smell. The respondents who agreed are 57.76%, 13.79% strongly agree, 10.34% neither agree nor disagree, 16.38% disagree and 1.72% strongly disagree with that statement.

Q3. “KFC” brand is differentiable or identifiable through seeing the logo.

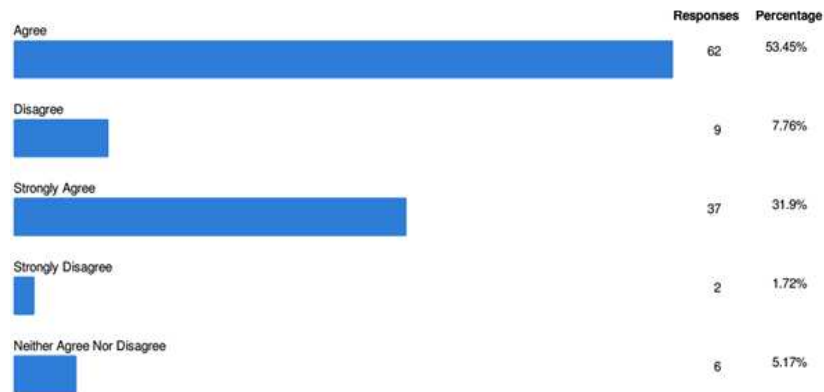


Figure 4: KFC is Identifiable through Logo

The diagram shown (Figure 4) represents the result of question asked to the respondents about brand identity of KFC based on the logo. The respondents replied, 53.45% agree, 31.9% strongly agree, 5.17% neither agree nor disagree, 7.76% disagree and 1.72% are strongly disagree with that statement.

Q4. “KFC” brand is differentiable or identifiable through touching a piece of chicken.

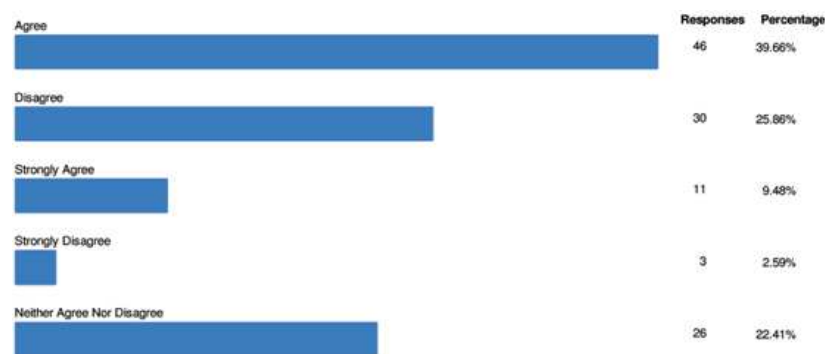


Figure 5: KFC is Identifiable through Touch

The diagram shown (Figure 5) represents the result of question asked to the respondents about brand identity of KFC based on the touch. The respondents are replied with agree which is 39.66%, 22.41% replied with neither agree nor disagree, 25.86% are replied with disagree and 2.59% replied with strongly disagree and 9.48% replied with strongly agree.

Q5. “KFC” brand is differentiable or identifiable through listening the jingle/advertisement.



Figure 6: KFC is Identifiable through Sound

The diagram shown (Figure 6) represents the result of question asked to the respondents about brand identity of KFC based on the jingle. The respondents are replied with neither agree nor disagree which is 25%. On the other hand, 37.07% replied with agree, 12.93% replied with strongly agree and 22.41% replied with disagree, 2.59% replied with strongly disagree.

To summarize, following data is determined from my research according to the questionnaire answered by KFC consumers:

Table 1: Number of Respondents Who Identified or Recognized KFC

Senses	Number of Respondents Who Identified or Recognized KFC	Percentage
Taste	61 out of 116	52.59%
Smell	67 out of 116	57.76%
Sight	62 out of 116	53.45%
Sound	43 out of 116	37.07
Touch	46 out of 116	39.66%

CONCLUSIONS

Sensory branding is based on the idea that consumers are most likely to form, retain and revisit memory when their all five senses are engaged during the process of buying products or services. The research was conducted to get the impact of sensory branding strategy of KFC on consumer for building brand identity and brand awareness. The study found that of all five senses olfactory has highest impact on KFC consumers followed by visual and gustative aspects of it. On the other hand, tactile and auditory impacts on the sensory aspects (five senses) of KFC consumers are lesser respectively. Nevertheless, KFC brand equity is highest though there have been many competitors selling similar products along with many street vendors.

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