

THE IMPACT OF SENSORY BRANDING ON CONSUMER BUYING BEHAVIOUR

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Abstract

Evolution in the marketing sector can be associated with the exponential growth in competition today. Consequently, to keep pace with the changing times, marketers are always trying to offer an experience that their consumers just cannot forget. This is where Sensory Branding comes to their aid. Sensory branding is a type of marketing that helps brands connect with their consumers by appealing to their senses and evoking their sentiments, thereby creating a lasting positive impression on their subconscious minds. It is a relatively new concept and therefore despite its immense significance, not much research has been done on it. This study thus, attempts to bridge the gap that exists in literature and to help marketers devise effective marketing strategies. This study aims to find out if there is any relationship between sensory branding and consumer buying behaviour, to assess the impact of sensory branding elements on consumer behaviour and to examine if sensory branding can enhance customer satisfaction and brand loyalty. Lastly it seeks to examine whether there are any challenges faced by marketers in implementing sensory branding techniques.

Keywords: Sensory Branding, Consumer Buying Behaviour, Neuromarketing, Experiential Marketing, Sensory Marketing, Innovative Marketing, Consumer Behaviour.

INTRODUCTION

In today's fast paced competitive world, marketers have taken in their hands the mammoth task of keeping the masses hooked to their products. They spend millions every year trying to offer wholesome experiences to their customers and to lure them into buying their products or services.

Consumers also like to believe that they are independent thinkers when it comes to making a buying decision, but this could not have been farther away from reality. With around 85 to 95% of their purchase decisions being made subconsciously, they are significantly less logical than they tend to believe.

Studies show that consumer behaviour is an abstract concept which not only depends on the product or service being offered but also on a wide variety of factors surrounding the offering. This is where sensory branding comes in the picture. It puts to use these surroundings to curate a pleasant sensory experience that triggers desired emotions in their minds, resulting in positive purchase decisions. Using a sensory approach to marketing to form an emotional connection with consumers, sensory branding helps in accomplishing much more than conventional marketing techniques have to offer.

Research Gap

Competition in the marketplace has increased exponentially and compelled companies to try and stand out from the crowd by not only offering unique products but also creating memorable experiences for its consumers.

Therefore, marketers today use experiential marketing strategies such as sensory branding which stimulates their consumers' senses thus, creating pleasant experiences for them which in turn generates better brand perceptions.

In fact, this whole concept of sensory marketing has evolved from this need. Consequently, in the last decade or so, there has been an imperative need to address such marketing tactics.

However, there has only been limited research on this topic, especially in India in comparison to the other countries. Also, researchers often tend to isolate one or two of the senses at a time rather than incorporating all the senses together into their research investigations.

Thus, this study attempts to bridge the gap that exists in literature on this topic and thereby, to illustrate how sensory branding has the potential to influence the behaviour of consumers in India today, by examining the effects that all the senses can have on them by focussing on the feedback taken from the consumers residing in Kolkata, West Bengal.

This study could also act as an insight for marketers on how to devise more effective branding strategies and as a guide for future researchers.

Objectives of the Study

1. To find out whether there is any relationship between sensory branding and consumer buying behaviour.
2. To assess the impact of sensory branding elements (e.g., scent, music, touch) on consumer behaviour.
3. To examine whether sensory branding enhances brand loyalty and customer satisfaction.
4. To examine whether there are any challenges in implementing sensory branding.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

To make this research study a success, a mixed approach using both primary and secondary data has been adopted. For the collection of primary data, an online survey was conducted by drafting a questionnaire containing various MCQs and circulating it among people belonging to different genders, age groups, occupations, and income levels to gain maximum perception of the consumers with regards to the effect of sensory branding on them.

The data gathered was then analysed with the help of various graphs and statistical analysis tools to arrive at conclusions. For collection of secondary data, the data available on the internet along with the published articles of various scholars was referred to. This would in turn helping in backing up the conclusions reached by analysis of primary data.

ANALYSIS

To analyse the data collected from the primary sources, descriptive analysis has been used. The data for the study has been collected from 247 respondents of various ages, genders, occupations, and income levels.

a) Reliability Test

A Cronbach's alpha test or reliability test was conducted to measure the internal consistency of the data collected. Theoretically, this test gives a value between 0 and 1, and a score of 0.70 or above is good, meaning that the data is reliable and can be used for further analysis. The value of the test was obtained to be 0.878. Thus, the value was found to be according to the general rule of thumb and the data was considered to be reliable.

Cronbach's Alpha	
Value	0.8776231531

b) Correlation Analysis

Correlation analysis determines whether any relationship exists between two or more variables. Its value ranges from -1 to +1, indicating the strength and direction. Closer to -1 or 1 indicates a stronger correlation.

Several correlation tests were performed to conclude the objectives of this study –

1. A correlation test was carried out between sensory branding elements which influenced the consumers' and their likeliness to make a purchase based on their sensual experiences-

	Make A Purchase	Presentation and store set up	Pleasant smell	Soothing music	Ability to feel products	Ability to taste items
Make A Purchase	1					
Presentation and store set up	0.981324634	1				
Pleasant smell	0.959476856	0.987817004	1			
Soothing music	0.86819602	0.920635204	0.869296983	1		
Ability to feel products	0.897234186	0.933096145	0.977565334	0.759922745	1	
Ability to taste items	0.860847364	0.93214172	0.968883451	0.831809893	0.97611885	1

As can be observed, the above table indicates that there exists a very strong correlation between the two set of factors.

2. A correlation test was carried out to assess the impact of sensory branding elements on consumer behaviour-

	Affects moods and emotions	Physically examining	Tasting the items	Appealing fragrance	Appealing ambience
Affects moods and emotions	1				
Physically examining	0.862800421	1			
Tasting the items	0.848070771	0.998568952	1		
Appealing fragrance	0.935832102	0.652516869	0.639959446	1	
Appealing ambience	0.987064862	0.921939667	0.906882736	0.867422626	1

The above table suggests that a very strong positive correlation exists between the sensory branding elements and its impact on the moods and emotions of the consumers, which in turn also affects consumer buying behaviour.

3. A correlation test was carried out to find out whether there was any relationship between the impact sensory branding had on the moods and emotions of the consumers and their willingness to make a purchase on its basis-

	Affects moods and emotions	Want to make a purchase
Affects moods and emotions	1	
Want to make a purchase	0.916637155	1

The above table indicates a very strong positive correlation between the effect of sensory branding on the moods and emotions of consumers and their consequent willingness to make a purchase.

4. A correlation test was carried out between the likeliness of a brand to create warm feelings for consumers and for them to become loyal towards the brand based on their sensory experiences.

	Create warm feelings	Make you loyal
Create warm feelings	1	
Make you loyal	0.983863409	1

The above table indicates a very strong positive correlation between a brand creating warm feelings for the consumers and of them becoming loyal towards the brand.

5. A correlation test was carried out to find out whether there was any relationship between the likeliness of consumers making a purchase based on their sensory experiences and of them becoming loyal towards the brand-

	Make a purchase	Make you loyal
Make a purchase	1	
Make you loyal	0.985072989	1

The above table suggests the existence of a very strong positive correlation between the consumers wanting to make a purchase based on their sensory experiences and of them becoming loyal towards the brand.

6. A correlation test was carried out to determine whether there was any relationship between the consumers being loyal towards the brand because of their sensual experiences and of them being able to differentiate between competing brands because of their sensual experiences-

	Brand Loyalty	Brand differentiation
Brand Loyalty	1	
Brand differentiation	0.997682196	1

The above table suggests the existence of an almost perfect positive correlation between the loyalty of the consumers and of their ability to differentiate between brands based merely on their sensual experiences.

c) Regression Analysis

Regression analysis helps in determining the affect a change in the dependent variable has on the independent variables. The correlation coefficient, Multiple R, evaluates how strongly the variables are linearly related. Ranging from -1 to 1, its absolute value signifies the strength of the relationship. R Square, the coefficient of determination, demonstrates the degree of good fit. Significance F suggests how statistically significant or reliable the results are. If its value is less than 0.05 or 5%, the model is correct.

1. A regression analysis was conducted between the consumers wanting to make a purchase based on their sensual experiences and of them becoming loyal towards the brand. The results were:

Regression Statistics	
Multiple R	0.98507299
R Square	0.97036879
Adjusted R Square	0.96049173
Standard Error	10.1814445
Observations	5

The correlation coefficient or the value of Multiple R is 0.985, which suggests the existence of a very strong positive correlation.

The value of R Square is 0.970, which indicates that about 97% of the values fit the regression analysis model.

ANOVA					
	<i>df</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Significance F</i>
Regression	1	10184.21457	10184.21	98.24461	0.00218433
Residual	3	310.985434	103.6618		
Total	4	10495.2			

The value of Significance F is 0.002, which being less than 0.05 or 5%, indicates that the model is fine.

2. A regression analysis was carried out to determine the strength of the relationship between consumers becoming loyal towards the brand due to their sensual experiences and of them being able to differentiate between the brands. The results were:

Regression Statistics	
Multiple R	0.9976822
R Square	0.99536977
Adjusted R Square	0.99382635
Standard Error	4.08788778
Observations	5

The value of the correlation coefficient or Multiple R is 0.998. It is suggestive of the existence of a very strong positive relationship between these two variables.

The value of R Square is 0.995, which indicates that about 99.5% of the values fit the regression analysis model.

ANOVA					
	<i>df</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Significance F</i>
Regression	1	10777.06752	10777.07	644.9153	0.000133905
Residual	3	50.13247961	16.71083		
Total	4	10827.2			

The value of Significance F is almost 0, which is less than 5%, indicating that the model is fine.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Based on data gathered from the 247 respondents, it was observed that not only were most of them aware about sensory branding but had also either made or were likely to make purchases based on their sensual experiences. The respondents were asked about the sensory cues which attracted them the most and it was found that visual cues attracted them the most. They were, however, responsive to other sensory cues as well. About 91% of the total respondents, claimed that pleasant sensual experiences enhanced their overall shopping experience. A correlation test was carried out between the elements of sensory branding which had an impact on the consumers and their willingness to make a purchase on its basis. It was found out that a very strong positive correlation existed between these two factors. Thus, it can be concluded that a relationship exists between sensory branding and consumer buying behaviour.

Based on the data collected from the respondents, it was observed that sensory branding appealed to the consumers. They felt more comfortable in making their purchases when pleasant sensual experiences were incorporated along with the products or services being offered. Around 84% of the respondents also admitted that it influenced their moods and emotions while shopping. It invoked warm feelings, touching their emotional sentiments and thereby, leaving them with the urge to make a purchase. A correlation test was carried out between the elements of sensory branding which influenced the consumers and the impact it had on their moods and emotions. It was then discovered that a very strong positive correlation existed between these two factors. Another test was conducted to analyse the impact of pleasant sensual experiences on the moods and emotions of the consumers and their willingness to make a purchase on its basis. From the results, it was observed that a very strong positive correlation existed between these. Thus, it can be concluded that the elements of sensory branding have an impact on the behaviour of the consumers. From the data collected, it was observed that around 80% of the respondents felt that they would be loyal towards the brands that could offer them pleasant sensory experiences and enhance their overall satisfaction. These experiences could create warm feelings for them to the point that they could associate certain brands with their pleasant experiences and would also be willing to pay a premium for specified products. They would also be able to differentiate between brands based solely on their sensual experiences. Several correlation tests were conducted to examine whether the loyalty and satisfaction of the consumers were enhanced due to sensory branding. All these tests showed that strong positive correlations existed between the factors. A regression analysis was also conducted between the ability of brands to create warm feelings among the consumers and of them becoming loyal towards the brands. The results showed that a very strong relationship existed between these factors. Thus, it can be concluded that sensory branding enhances the brand loyalty and

satisfaction levels of the consumers. The consumers were asked about the sensory cues which attracted them the most and analysing the results from a bird's eye view, it was observed that different people were attracted to different sensory cues. They were also asked, by citing examples of each of the factors of sensory branding, as to what they found the most appealing and it was then noted that different people were appealed by different factors and at differing levels, implying that factors which were likely to have an impact on some might leave others indifferent to it. Thus, it can be concluded that trying to please everyone with the same tactics might be very difficult for the marketers. However, it has also been concluded that putting in these efforts are worth a shot!

RECOMMENDATIONS

Consumers respond positively to sensory branding techniques, leading to increased loyalty towards brands. Marketers should incorporate these techniques into their strategies to benefit from this effect. Different consumers have varying preferences for sensory cues. Marketers could consider these diverse interests and design strategies that could appeal to a broad audience, if not everyone. Marketers can also focus on specific target segments and tailor their sensory marketing strategies, accordingly, embracing niche marketing approaches. Sensory branding techniques are generally accepted by consumers, and their effectiveness has been proven. Marketers can leverage this field of marketing to their advantage.

CONCLUSION

In today's fast-paced and highly competitive market, consumers have an overwhelming range of products and services to choose from. This makes it increasingly difficult for marketers to retain customers and cultivate brand loyalty. As a result, retailers are constantly searching for innovative ways to capture consumers' attention. One strategy that has emerged as particularly effective is sensory branding. Sensory branding recognizes that consumer behaviour is influenced not only by the product or service being offered but also by the surrounding factors and experiences. By leveraging sensory cues such as audio, visual, gustatory, tactile, and olfactory stimuli, marketers can curate a pleasant and immersive sensory experience that triggers desired emotions in consumers' minds. These experiences have a profound impact on consumers' perceptions, attitudes, and ultimately their purchase intentions. Positive sensory experiences generate a sense of pleasure and satisfaction in consumers, leading to increased brand affinity and repeat visits. Sensory branding focuses on the individual consumer, making them feel special and creating a personalized connection between the brand and the consumer. These experiences captivate consumers' attention and draw them in effortlessly, without requiring significant concentration. In today's competitive landscape, sensory branding helps brands stand out and differentiate themselves from the competition. Brands that lack a sensory appeal often struggle to engage with their target audience effectively. By engaging the senses, brands can forge a stronger emotional connection with consumers, which in turn enhances brand loyalty. In conclusion, sensory branding holds immense potential as a future-oriented approach in the field of marketing. By creating pleasant sensory experiences, marketers can engage consumers on a deeper emotional level, foster brand loyalty, and differentiate

themselves from competitors. While there is no one-size-fits-all approach or consistent framework for incorporating sensory elements into marketing strategies, the importance and value of sensory branding cannot be overstated.

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