

“ROLE OF SENSORY CUES IN CONSUMER DECISION MAKING PROCESS” – A STUDY ON SOME SELECT BRANDS AT CHENNAI

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ABSTRACT--*The concept of sensory marketing defines the most effective marketing strategy tool influencing the consumer's sensual experiences, purchasing behavior and brand presence for the products, this is a marketing strategy whose functions is to lead the incentives to the recipient senses, involving the senses of sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch, in fulfilling the purchasing process. The five human sense have great importance for an individual's different purchase experiences and consumption processes. Sensory marketing is the marketing techniques that aim to seduce the consumer by using senses to influence the consumer's feelings and behaviours. The senses are image of our daily lives, and using them we satisfy our needs and desires. The required information for this research have been obtained with the help of a well-designed questionnaire. This study is exploratory in nature adopting both descriptive and analytical methodologies. In this endeavour, the use of SEM has also been made to test the theoretical model empirically, in terms of measurement and structural model. The present researcher has made a sincere attempt through this piece of research, to know how these five senses influence the behaviour of the consumers of the sample products.*

Keywords-- *decision making process” – a study on some select brands at Chennai.*

I. INTRODUCTION

The concept of sensory marketing defines the most effective marketing strategy tool influencing the consumers sensual experiences, purchasing behavior and brand presence for the products, this is a marketing strategy whose functions is to lead the incentives to the recipient senses, involving the senses of sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch in fulfilling the purchasing process. The five human sense 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. According to the definition provided by the American marketing association, sensory marketing “is the marketing techniques that aim to seduce the consumer by using senses to influence the consumer's feelings and behaviours”. Every consumer has five natural responses to everything in their lives, and that includes shopping.

I. FIVE SENSES IN THE SENSORY MARKETING – A GLANCE

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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. The senses are image of our daily lives, and by using them we satisfy your need and desires.

II. VISUAL (SIGHT) SENSORY CUES

Sight is the 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. Colour produces different reactions (biological, psychological, and draw attention to an object) in people and has certain mental impact on consumers. Significant factors such as logos, packaging, color, design and attractive shape can be strategic approach to strengthen and make the desired image of a product in consumers' minds.

III. OLFACTORY (SMELL) SENSORY CUES

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. The sense of smell involves 45% communication with the brand. The sense of smell is very close to our emotions and behavior and it has great influence on our behavior.

IV. GUSTATIVE (TASTE) SENSORY CUES

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 are using marketing through the palate, that can be persuasive for the consumer.

V. AUDITORY (SOUND) SENSORY CUES

Sound has long been recognized as an important driver of positive effects on mood, preferences and consumer behavior. The sound can be used as an efficient tool for communicating with the unconscious needs of the consumer.

VI. TACTILE (TOUCH) SENSORY CUES

Touch is the largest sensory organ of the body and it is symbol of physical contact through the skin. Touch sense is associated with brand building, by touching the products, consumer behavior and shopping is positively affected. When touching the touch-screen electronic products encourages shoppers to interact with the products.

VII. NEED AND IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

Understanding the behaviour of the consumer is a complex phenomenon, since one cannot easily intrude into the inner mind set of the consumer. The behaviour and the attitude of the human being varies under different environment and at the different point of time. The behaviour is not even the same in the identical environment.

Therefore, how these things change the consumers buying behaviour, across the sample products under the study, is tried through this research.

VIII. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

As pointed out earlier, products have unique characteristics which cannot be isolated or neglected while making the purchase. In this context, the products are mostly bought by giving weightage to the five important cues that are vital in purchase decision viz (visual, sound, smell, taste and touch). Therefore, this research first identifies, studies and analyze the key elements that are attributable to five cues.

IX. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

To study the conceptual issues, theoretical background and to review the available literary evidences pertaining to the consumer behaviour, in general, and its relevance to sensory cues, in specific.

- To identify, study and analyze the role of five sensory cues that determines the purchase decision process across the sample respondents.

X. METHODOLOGY

This study is exploratory in nature adopting both descriptive and analytical methodologies. The use of descriptive methodology has become a compelling factor in this research as it covers the study of theoretical background and review of literary background not only pertaining to conceptual issues but also its relevance to the current research problem. Besides, the use of analytical methodology is also considered to be pertinent in this research as it focuses on measuring and evaluating the influential factors that are incorporated, so as to have an in depth knowledge and insights into the research problem, in specific. The research design includes sources of data, sample size and sampling techniques, instruments for data collection, scaling techniques adopted, framework for data analysis and the adoption of appropriate tools so as to have meaningful inference and the interpretations, thereon

XI. SOURCES OF DATA

This study is mainly based on primary data, directly collected from the sample respondents who have participated in this research. However, the use of secondary data has also been made in this research, wherever necessary, by referring the brochures, pamphlets, advertisements, and manuals

XII. DATA COLLECTION METHOD

This study has adopted a survey method for collecting the required information from the sample respondents using the sample products, under the study. The oral survey was conducted across the sample size that enabled the present researcher to have a first hand information from the respondents as an instrument for data collection.

XIII. INSTRUMENT FOR DATA COLLECTION

The required information for this research have been obtained with the help of a well designed questionnaire, consisting of thirty eight questions, covering various aspects of demographic characteristics of the respondents and the factors determining the five sensory cues, with five anchors, ranging from five to one ie strongly agree [5] to strongly disagree

[1] as a scale of measure, suggested by **Rennis Likert**.

XIV. STATISTICAL TOOLS FOR DATA ANALYSIS:

The information obtained from the sample respondents have been systematically analysed for making suitable inference and the interpretations thereon. In this endeavour, the use of SEM has also been made to test the theoretical model empirically, in terms of measurement and structural model.

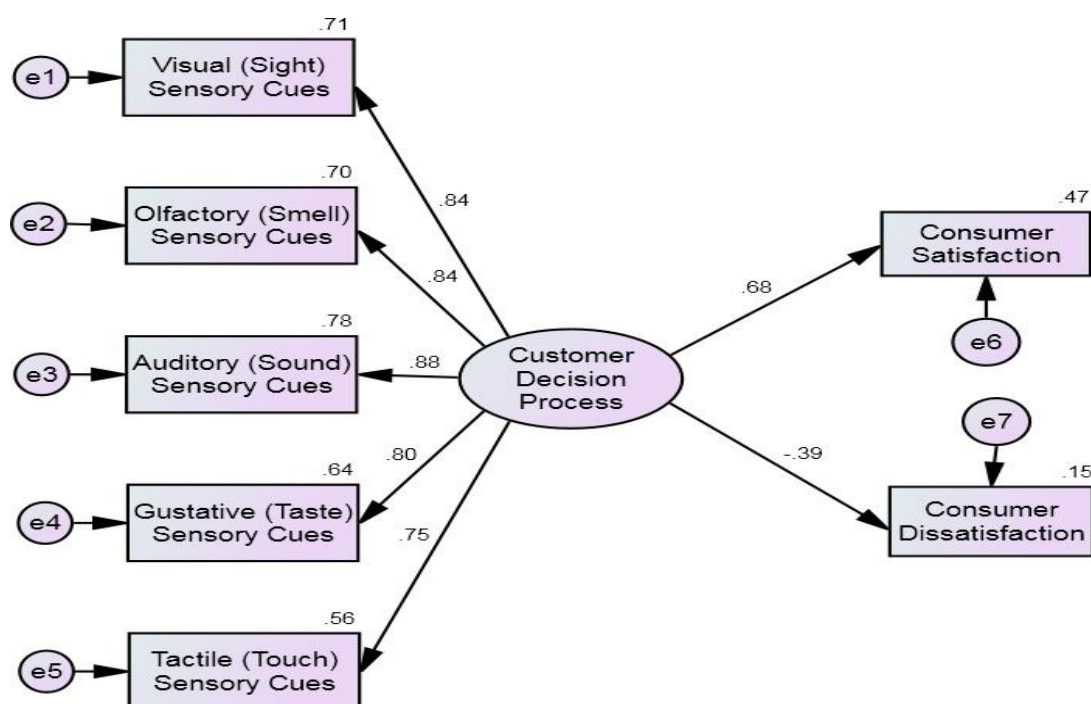
XV. TESTING OF NULL HYPOTHESES:

H01 : There is no significant variance among the various demographic classifications with respect to five sensory cues.

H02: Thefivesensorycuesdonotsignificantlyinfluencetheconsumerdecisionprocessand satisfaction.

XVI. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Charles S.Areni et.al. (1996) carried out the research entitled, “assessing consumers, affective responses to retail environments: a tale of two stimulation techniques”. In this research, sixty-two student subjects rated either slides of the interiors of various apparel stores(visual stimulus) or twelve in-store background music sections(audio stimulus) using amodifiedversionoftheMehrabianandRussellpleasure/arousal/seriousnessscale(PAS) for effective responses. The primary objective in slide selection was heterogeneity. The effect measures were used to predict subjects’ perception of the visual or the audio stimuli on a number of store image variables (i.e., merchandise selection, prices, service quality, etc.).



Eric R.Spangenberg et.al. (1996) found that there is a difference between evaluations of behaviour in a scented environment and an unscented store environment. Those scent, notwithstanding that none of the subject included in the analyses mentioned the presence of scent.

Mitchell et.al.(1997) studied "the use of scents to influence consumers :the sense of using scents to make sense" and its role in mediating memory processes. In this research pleasant ambience odours are found to affect consumer decision making, depending on whether the scents are congruent or incongruent with the target product class.

The power of sensory marketing in advertising analysed by **Aradhna Krishna et al,(2001)** found the role of sensory marketing in driving advertisement effectiveness.

Retailers can benefit from allowing customers to touch their products is the feelings of the study carried out by **Bianca grohmann (2005).**

Research on the sense of touch or haptics has increased in the marketing literature, possibly encouraged by the rise of online shopping where marketers are interested in how to compensate consumers for touch when it is unavailable. Hence, this study was carried out by **Joann Peck and Suzanne (2009)** on "The effect of finer touch on perceived ownership".

XVII. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATIONS

STRUCTURAL EQUATION MODEL (SEM)

Table1: Results of Regression weights

| | | | UNSTANDARD COEFFICIENT | S.E. | C.R. | P |
|---------|------|-----|---------------------------|------|--------|----|
| VSC_tot | <--- | CDP | 4.3 74 | .381 | 11.465 | ** |
| ASC_tot | <--- | CDP | 3.1 61 | .256 | 12.350 | ** |
| OSC_tot | <--- | CDP | 4.1 78 | .367 | 11.384 | ** |
| GSC_tot | <--- | CDP | 2.2 75 | .215 | 10.573 | ** |
| TSC_tot | <--- | CDP | 2.8 79 | .299 | 9.632 | ** |
| COS_tot | <--- | CDP | 1.4 04 | .165 | 8.518 | ** |
| DSS_tot | <--- | CDP | - .67 9 | .155 | -4.364 | ** |

** It imply significant at 1% level

Ho1: The visual sensory cues do not significantly influence the consumer decision process and satisfaction.

Ho2: The auditory sensory cues do not significantly influence the consumer decision process and satisfaction.

Ho3: The olfactory sensory cues do not significantly influence the consumer decision process and satisfaction.

Ho4: The gustative sensory cues do not significantly influence the consumer decision process and satisfaction.

Ho5: The tactile sensory cues do not significantly influence the consumer decision process and satisfaction.

Ho6: The five sensory cues do not influence the consumer satisfaction through consumer decision process .

On looking at the above table(4.4a) ,it is found that all the five sensory cues significantly influence at 1% level, in the consumer decision making process and consumer satisfaction across the distinguished respondents, choosing the respective products viz.(Fast Moving Consumer Goods, Consumer Durable, Consumer Luxury and Others products) considered in this study. It is concluded that the above null hypothesis are rejected on consolidating the regression weights, variances, squared multiple correlation.

Table 2: Results of Consolidated table

| STANDARDIZED REGRESSION WEIGHTS(a) | | | | VARIANCES(b) | | | | | SQUARED MULTIPLE CORRELATIO N (C) | |
|---------------------------------------|--|--|----------|--------------|----------|-----|-----|---|--|----------|
| | | | Estimate | | Estimate | S.E | C.R | P | | Estimate |

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|---------|------|-----|------------|---------|-----------|-----------|-------|----|---------|-------|
| VSC_tot | <--- | CDP | 0.842 | CD P | 1 | | | | DSS_tot | 0.15 |
| ASC_tot | <--- | CDP | 0.882 | e3 | 2.85 6 | 0.50 7 | 5.633 | ** | COS_tot | 0.469 |
| OSC_tot | <--- | CDP | 0.838 | e1 | 7.85 3 | 1.24 | 6.334 | ** | TSC_tot | 0.561 |
| GSC_tot | <--- | CDP | 0.799 | e2 | 7.38 9 | 1.15 7 | 6.384 | ** | GSC_tot | 0.638 |
| TSC_tot | <--- | CDP | 0.749 | e4 | 2.93 9 | 0.43 3 | 6.787 | ** | OSC_tot | 0.703 |
| COS_tot | <--- | CDP | 0.685 | e5 | 6.48 6 | 0.91 3 | 7.107 | ** | VSC_tot | 0.709 |
| DSS_tot | <--- | CDP | - 0.388 | e6 | 2.23 4 | 0.30 3 | 7.367 | ** | ASC_tot | 0.778 |
| | | | | e7 | 2.60 1 | 0.33 3 | 7.824 | | | |

** It imply significant at 1% level

On looking at the above table, which consolidates the values of regression weights (table a),squaredmultiplecorrelation(tablec)andthevariances(tableb),indetail,itisfoundthat auditorysensorycues(.778)playsapredominantroleamongthefivesensorycues, followed byvisualsensorycues(.709),olfactorysensorycues(.703),gustativesensorycues(.638)and tactile sensory cues(.561). On correlating the values in the above table with the table A) for cross verifying their influence towards the consumer decision process is also found to be true i.e. auditory sensory cues to CDP (.882), visual sensory cues to CDP (.842), olfactory sensory cues to CDP (.838), gustative sensory cues to CDP (.799) and tactile sensory cues toCDP(.749),whichleadtoconsumersatisfaction(0.685)Theorderofsignificantinfluence towards the consumer decision process is established, in this part of analysis. Further, these sensory cues and their intensity of influence on the consumer decision process, very much leads to the high level consumer satisfaction(.685) while the level of consumer dissatisfaction is highly negligible / insignificant(-0.388). However, the variance in the intensity of the influence is also verified in table B, according to which, the tactile sensory cues shows the maximum variance (7.107), followed by gustative sensory cues(6.787), visualsensrycues(6.384)andauditorysensorycues(6.334)whichshowmoderatevariance while olfactory sensory cues(5.633) show the least variances comparing with the other four variance i.e. the olfactory sensory cues(5.633) have emerged as the consistent sensorycues, while auditory sensory cues (6.334),visual sensory cues (6.384), gustative sensory cues(6.787) have shown the moderate variance and the tactile sensory cues(7.107) is considered to be good by and large, as it shows the maximum variance, in terms of the critical ratios(CR).

Table 3: Representing Model fit summary

| C M I N | | | | | | RMR , GFI | | | | |
|-----------------------------|----------------------|---------------|-------------------|-------------------|---------------------|------------------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|-----------------|
| Mod el | NPA R | CMIN | DF | P | CMIN/D F | Model | RMR | GFI | AGFI | PG |
| Default model | 14 | 20.981 | 14 | 0.10 2 | 1.499 | Default model | 0.062 | 0.953 | 0.907 | 0.4 |
| Saturated model | 28 | 0 | 0 | | | Saturated model | 0 | 1 | | |
| Independence model | 7 | 523.72 5 | 21 | 0 | 24.929 | Independence model | 0.373 | 0.341 | 0.121 | 0.2 |
| BASELINE COMPARISONS | | | | | | RMS EA | | | | |
| Mod el | NFI Delta1 | RFI rho1 | IFI Delta 2 | TLI rho2 | CFI | Model | RMSEA | L O 90 | HI 90 | PCL LOS E |
| Default model | 0.96 | 0.94 | 0.986 | 0.97 9 | 0.986 | Default mo de l | 0.063 | 0 | 0.115 | 0.315 |
| Saturated model | 1 | | 1 | | 1 | Independen c e mo de l | 0.436 | 0.4 | 0.469 | 0 |
| Independence model | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | | | | | |

Table 4 :Substantiating the model fit

| Indices | Value | Suggested value |
|---------------------|--------|-------------------------------|
| Chi-square value | 16.262 | - |
| DF | 4 | - |
| P value | 0.102 | > 0.05 (Hair et al., 1998) |
| Chi-square value/DF | 1.4999 | < 5.00 (Hair et al., 1998) |
| GFI | .953 | > 0.90 (Hu and Bentler, 1999) |
| AGFI | .907 | > 0.90 (Hair et al. 2006) |
| NFI | .960 | > 0.90 (Hu and Bentler, 1999) |
| CFI | .986 | > 0.90 (Daire et al., 2008) |
| RMR | 0.062 | < 0.08 (Hair et al. 2006) |
| RMSEA | 0.063 | < 0.08 (Hair et al. 2006) |

From the above table it is found that the calculated P value is 0.102 is greater than 0.05 which indicates perfect fit. Here Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) value (0.953) and Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI) value (0.907) is greater than 0.9 which represent it is a good fit. The calculated Normed Fit Index (NFI) value (0.960) and Comparative Fit Index (CFI) value (0.986) indicates that it is a perfectly fit and also it is found that Root Mean square Residuals (RMR) 0.062 and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) value is

0.63 which is less than 0.08, which indicated its perfectly fit.

XVIII. CONCLUSION

The present day consumers do not buy whichever product available in the market. Mostly they adopt the scientific way of purchase when they buy the product of their choice. They are used to gather information relating to the proposed product before they make an actual purchase. The information so gathered are mostly pertaining to the availability of the product, the availability of the alternative, the cost of the product, the exchange value, the resale value, the availability of service facilities, guarantee and warranty attached with the product and compare these aspects with the alternate brands. They take their purchase decision mostly on the basis of the above aspects

and take the purchase decisions based on the availability of the funds with them. In addition, the unique characteristics of the product are also analyzed. It may be relating to appearance of the product (visual), may be relating to audibility attached with the product (sound), it may be relating to touch and feel, it may be relating to fragrance (smell) and it may be relating to taste in terms of sample. These things matter much for any type of consumer, irrespective of product category, for making the appropriate decision process. If these aspects are comfortable to the consumers, they are very much satisfied. The satisfied customer is the asset to the organization since he will bring an additional consumer not only in terms of purchase repetition but also in terms of positive word of mouth. The dissatisfied consumer is a creator of stumble block for the product. In the above context, the study was conducted by obtaining information from the sample respondents who had participated in this research. On analyzing the information obtained from them, it is found that all the five sensory cues significantly contribute to the consumer decision making process and satisfaction. The level of dissatisfaction is found to be very negligible. All the five sensory cues are found to be equally important with respect to different product category across the various demographic characters of the sample respondents who have participated in this research, this study finally concluded.

XIX. SCOPE FOR FURTHER STUDY

All the products category has an unique product characters and features. Each category requires the adoption of separate sensory cues or the mix of all. While the products require visual appeal should always have a pleasant sound. While the product it meant for only sound appeal need not be visually good. Therefore, the focus must be given for the particular aspects. This study has over emphasized on all the five sensory cues that separately influence different categories of product. Therefore, further study is immense, to attempt on specific sensory cues that influence the purchase of a particular product to have a microscopic analysis for meaningful findings. The adoption of wide number of variables would give an unwarranted result. Therefore, the variables are to be standardized. However, the exclusion of critical variables are not advisable as it would make the decision making process an incomplete one. A separate study is possible by focusing on consumer satisfaction as this present study has focused on purchase decision process as a first outcome variable and consumer satisfaction as a second outcome variable. The study on consumer satisfaction can also be pursued in terms of level of the dissatisfaction since the dissatisfied customer creates a negative result in terms of negative repurchase intent and negative word of mouth. Further study is also possible in this regard to unravel the truth behind the consumer dissatisfaction.

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