

A Conceptual Comparison of Digital and Physical Sensory Marketing: Implications for Customer Experience and Purchase Decision

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Abstract

Indeed, sensory marketing has gained considerable relevance as a strategic tool that allows firms to influence customers' perceptions, feelings, and buying behaviour through stimulating their senses. Although sensory marketing has always been related to physical settings of the business environment, the fast development of the digital technologies has extended its use to digital settings using visual, auditory, and interactive forms. In spite of increased implementation of digital sensory marketing, there are substantial differences between digital and physical environments regarding the number of sensory stimuli used. There is little research comparing these two contexts and investigating the similarities and differences between them. An integrated conceptual understanding of this issue is required in order to reveal how different sensory stimuli affect customers in digital and physical environments and influence their purchasing behaviour. Thus, this study compares digital and physical sensory marketing based on literature review of recent years and the impact of the sensory marketing on customers' experience and purchase decisions. A thorough review of peer-reviewed journals was performed on articles that appeared within the period from 2020 to 2026 with regard to identifying themes, theories, and trends in sensory marketing. The results show that physical sensory marketing creates richer multisensory experiences through interaction with products, which improves trust, emotions, and purchase confidence of consumers. On the other hand, digital sensory marketing is based mostly on visual and auditory stimuli and thus requires people to make up for the lack of missing senses using imagination and cognition. However, the gap between missing and available sensory information is being narrowed due to the use of new technologies like Artificial Intelligence (AI), Virtual Reality (VR), Augmented Reality (AR), and haptic devices. In addition, customer experience is considered to be an important mediator that increases the association between sensory marketing and purchase decisions in digital and physical realms. The proposed model enriches the theory of sensory marketing because it includes aspects of digital and physical environments into one theoretical construct. The results provide valuable information for further research and practical application in retailing and digital marketing.

Keywords: Sensory Marketing, Digital Sensory Marketing, Physical Sensory Marketing, Customer Experience, Purchase Decision, Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) Theory, Consumer Behaviour.

Introduction

Indeed, over the last twenty years, the retail sector has experienced tremendous transformation owing to technological changes, lifestyle changes of consumers, and the incorporation of technology into shopping practices. Consumers do not just buy products from the conventional brick-and-mortar stores anymore; rather, they have access to products through online sites, mobile apps, and social commerce.

The transformation has resulted in a new kind of relationship that exists between business and consumers, where memorable shopping experience becomes important. In other words, businesses have realized that in order to be able to form relationships with customers, the provision of only functional benefit will not help.

Sensory marketing refers to a marketing technique that incorporates the stimulation of consumers' five senses sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch to affect consumers' perception, feelings, and buying behaviour. Contrary to the traditional marketing approach, which revolves around features and price, sensory marketing uses various sensory channels to create an emotional connection with customers. Lighting, colour scheme, background music, fragrance, textures, and product tasting are some of the sensory elements that retailers use to create shopping environment that influences the buying behaviour of customers.

The advent of e-commerce and digital shopping has extended the applicability of sensory marketing beyond the physical environment to a digital space. The digital platform utilizes high-resolution product pictures, interactive video, recommendation services, augmented reality, virtual reality, artificial intelligence, and immersive user interface in an attempt to create elements of physical sensory experience. Contrary to the physical space, however, the digital space is restricted in creating physical sensory experiences involving touch, smell, and taste. As such, consumers depend heavily on visual stimuli, audio cues, past experiences, and mental imagination to evaluate the product online. This leads to what is known as a "sensory gap."

The introduction of new technologies in recent times has tried to close this sensory gap by using technology such as virtual product demonstration, AI-powered personalization, virtual try-on solutions, 360-degree product view, and haptic feedback technology. This has not only improved the capacity of digital retailers to offer better customer experience but has increased the engagement level and purchase confidence of customers as well. Even though these advances have been made in digital space, physical retail environments continue to offer superior multisensory experience because of direct interaction with the product and environment.

There is extensive literature that shows the positive effect of sensory marketing on customer emotions, perception of a brand, customer satisfaction and purchase behaviour. Nevertheless, a significant number of existing studies considers the topic of digital sensory marketing and physical sensory marketing separately from each other. In addition, there is a lack of research on integrating two perspectives and studying the effect of customer experience on the relationship between sensory stimuli and purchase decisions in both physical and digital retailing settings. To address the mentioned research gaps, this paper presents an integrated conceptual framework of digital and physical sensory marketing based on S-O-R Theory.

In accordance with this framework, the study examines how digital and physical sensory stimuli affect consumers' perceptions and emotional responses with the use of the mediator – customer experience and how it impacts the process of decision-making in terms of purchase decisions. With the help of synthesis of recent literature, this paper adds to the development of sensory marketing theory and offers theoretical and managerial implications for future research and practices in sensory marketing. [6], [7]

Review of Literature

Yahia Mouammime (2026) analyses the vast literature review on the application of artificial intelligence in customer experience and digital marketing from 2004 to 2025. Systematic search results in 191 papers, which were analysed using bibliometric and content analysis. Findings suggest that applications of artificial intelligence are widely used in sectors such as e-commerce, banking and tourism industry. In this paper, it is found that sensory marketing in the digital environment is mainly focused on vision, where issues like interface and AR play an important role. But other sensory dimensions like tactile, olfactory and gustatory senses are not taken into consideration properly. The results obtained from these papers emphasize customer satisfaction, engagement and purchasing intention. Furthermore, technological advancements like VR, IoT and robotics have not been studied well in connection with sensory marketing. [1]

Merylin Monaro et al., (2026) examined the systematic review of sensory marketing studies undertaken through VR and AR technologies in retail environments. This paper highlights the importance of the five senses in shaping the purchase experience of consumers in the real world. According to the findings, the lack of sensory experience is a significant problem in e-commerce platforms. The two key

aspects of research in this study are consumer reactions in the digital world and compensating for the missing senses, which in this case is the sense of touch. The study shows that VR and AR technologies help to engage consumers through immersion and interaction. The study suggests that sensory marketing research in immersive and interactive digital environments is in its infancy stage. [2]

Dr. Anupama Sundar D (2025) aims at examining the influence of sensory marketing on consumers' buying behaviour within the field of coffee consumption. The information was collected through an online survey of 132 people who were older than 20 and were coffee drinkers. The research examines the relationship between sensory elements that comprise vision, smell, sound, taste, and touch as well as emotions related to pleasure, arousal, and dominance. The findings reveal that there are strong correlations between sensory variables such as smell, taste, and touch and emotions like arousal and dominance. Moreover, the study highlights the direct effect of emotions on flow and behavioural intentions. Lastly, the moderating role of consumer motivations including utilitarian and relational motivations was revealed in the study. [3]

Xin Rao and Qianru Huang (2025) This research is dedicated to analysing the theoretical foundation and latest developments in the sphere of sensory marketing as an emerging marketing concept. In particular, sensory marketing refers to marketing approaches designed to use all the five senses in order to influence consumers' behaviour through marketing means. The review of literature is performed based on foreign and domestic academic sources, which helps to understand the evolution of the discussed topic. The review proves that sensory marketing is based upon the principles of the S-O-R (stimulus-organism-response) theory and the idea of embodied cognition. Overall, one can state that the literature review has shown that the field of sensory marketing has developed a certain body of knowledge. However, there are some gaps in research related to the cross-sensory perception and use of modern technologies, as well as negative consequences of sensory overload. [4]

Zoran Krupka (2023) studies the effect of sensory engagement on brand perception using an empirical study. The study was conducted using data from 189 subjects. Among the statistical methods that have been used in the study are factor analysis and regression analysis. There are three important areas that have been studied in relation to this issue. These areas include number of senses engaged, frequency of engagement and intensity of sensory engagement. From the results of the study, it is evident that the number of senses involved has a positive effect on brand perception. Furthermore, frequency of sensory engagement has a positive effect on consumer attitude towards the brand. [5]

Research Gap

Sensory marketing has received considerable research focus in recent times due to its potential to affect the emotions and perceptions of customers along with influencing their purchasing decisions through sensory engagement. Many previous works have studied the effect of sensory stimuli including visuals, sounds, smells, touch, and taste on consumer behaviour at the physical point of sale. Equally, the increasing popularity of e-commerce has inspired scholars to conduct research in digital sensory marketing that incorporates the use of visual and auditory stimuli for the purpose of enriching the shopping experience of consumers online. Even though both lines of work have made substantial contributions to sensory marketing research, some gaps exist.

First, existing researches on sensory marketing in the digital world and in the physical environment have been done in isolation and, therefore, there has not been enough theoretical knowledge about the similarities and dissimilarities between the two. In addition, very few researchers have tried to integrate the two environments in a theoretical framework that captures the effects of sensory stimulation in the process of making buying decision.

Secondly, the current literature emphasizes sensory perception in terms of visual and audio sensory inputs in digital marketing, but there is no sufficient literature on the usage of tactile, smell, and taste inputs in this regard. The use of recent technologies like Artificial Intelligence, Virtual Reality, Augmented Reality, and haptics tries to fill this gap of sensory experience in online shopping, but there is a lack of research in this area.

Thirdly, consumer experience has been identified as one of the major factors affecting consumer behaviour; however, there has not been enough emphasis on its role as the intermediary variable between sensory marketing and buying decision. Existing research mostly focuses on direct relationship rather than explaining the psychological process of how the sensory cues affect consumer buying behaviour.

Finally, the absence of comprehensive theoretical frameworks incorporating Stimulus-Organism-Response theory, Mental Imagery theory, and Embodied Cognition theory in explaining sensory marketing in both digital and physical spaces cannot be overlooked. This study aims to fill these gaps in research by developing a conceptual framework that differentiates between digital and physical sensory marketing, and their impact on consumer experience and purchase decisions.

Research Questions

Considering the above research gap, the current research poses the following research questions:

- RQ1:** What is the effect of sensory marketing on customer experience in both digital and physical retail settings?
- RQ2:** What are the main differences between digital sensory marketing and physical sensory marketing in relation to sensory experience and customer interaction?
- RQ3:** How do new technological innovations such as Artificial Intelligence, Virtual Reality, and Augmented Reality overcome the sensory gap in digital marketing?
- RQ4:** In what way is the customer experience the mediating factor between sensory marketing and consumer purchasing behaviour?
- RQ5:** How can the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) theory explain consumer behaviour in digital and physical sensory marketing?

Objectives of the Study

The main purpose of this research is to build up a conceptual understanding about sensory marketing through digital and physical senses and the effects of both on customer experience and purchase decisions.

The specific objectives are:

- To analyse the impact of sensory marketing on consumer behaviour in the digital and physical context of retail.
- To compare sensory marketing in digital and physical context in relation to sensory engagement, customer interaction and purchase decision.
- To analyse the concept of customer experience as an intervening variable between sensory marketing and purchase decision.
- To analyse the contribution of technology advancements in making digital sensory experience more advanced.
- To develop a conceptual framework in relation to stimulus–organism–response (S-O-R) Theory.

Evolution of Sensory Marketing

Sensory marketing has changed greatly from being a simple method of promoting goods to becoming an elaborate marketing technique involving psychology, neuroscience, consumer behaviour, and experiential marketing. Traditional marketing involved focusing on the quality of products, prices, distribution, and promotions among others. But through research, it was realized that the consumer purchasing process was not based on mere logic but rather influenced by emotions and senses. From that research, sensory marketing emerged as a science which aimed at exciting consumers' senses to develop a unique experience about brands and their associated emotions. The science gained popularity towards the end of the twentieth century when researchers started examining the effects of environment on consumer behaviour. It was discovered that retailing environment such as lighting, music, scent, temperature, colour, and product displays could affect emotions, spending time in the shop, and purchases. Sensory marketing became more than just visual merchandising by including all the five senses of a human being.

In parallel to the fast development of e-commerce and digitalization, there emerged a novel approach to sensory marketing. In contrast to the brick-and-mortar environment, digital environment uses mostly visual and auditory sensations to convey product details and to engage customers. Technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), Augmented Reality (AR), Virtual Reality (VR), 360-degree visualizations, interactive web sites, personalization, and other features of the digital interface have changed the way online shopping is conducted. Although it is impossible for these technologies to

replicate physical sensory experience of touch, smell, and taste of products, it allows consumers to vividly imagine their properties and diminishes purchase uncertainty. Nowadays, sensory marketing is considered an essential element of customer experience management and omnichannel marketing. Enterprises implement physical and digital aspects of sensory marketing in order to provide consistent customer experience in different shopping channels. The history of sensory marketing shows that this approach moves from transactional marketing to experience marketing, where emotional involvement and sensory immersion become key elements of the process of influencing consumers and their behaviour. The future innovations are supposed to include more artificial intelligence, wearable devices, haptic systems, and virtual reality to overcome the limitations of sensory marketing in digital retailing. [6]

Digital vs Physical Sensory Marketing

The transition of the retail market from brick-and-mortar to online has greatly affected the manner in which consumers perceive brands and products. Although there are similarities between online and offline sensory marketing in influencing consumers' perception and buying decisions, these two types of marketing are very different in sensory richness, customer interaction, and the whole shopping experience process. Knowledge of such differences is necessary for developing effective marketing plans that take into account changes in consumers' preferences. Physical sensory marketing allows consumers to have a direct sensory experience of products using all five senses. The retailer creates an interesting environment using such tools as lighting, colour scheme, background music, pleasant smells, display of products, tactile sensations, and tasting of products. Such sensory stimuli create positive emotions, make customers more engaged in the process, lower purchasing risks and enhance the level of purchase confidence. Customers have an opportunity to test the product, see the alternative products and receive sensory responses.

As compared to multisensory marketing in physical environments, digital sensory marketing takes place in an environment that relies heavily on technological tools where customers have visual and auditory inputs as their sources of information. The technologies used by online sellers include high resolution images, videos, animations, websites, personalization tools, artificial intelligence, augmented reality, and virtual reality in order to create enjoyable shopping experience. Even though these technological tools increase the visualization of products and interaction between the consumers and products offered, digital environment lacks tactile, olfactory and gustatory stimuli. This means that customers use their past experiences, reviews about products, reputation of brands and their imaginations to make up for the lack of physical sensory interactions with the products. One of the biggest issues in digital sensory marketing is sensory gap, which is described as the inability of online platform to offer multisensory experiences just like the physical stores can. The sensory gap might lead to uncertainty about quality, fit, texture, fragrance or taste of the product especially when it comes to products like clothes, perfumes, cosmetics, furniture and food.

Such innovations increase the level of consumer engagement and boost the customers' trust when making purchases through the internet. Even though the two types of sensory marketing differ from each other, both of them have one thing in common – their purpose is to create positive consumer experiences, which would affect their purchasing behaviour. The strength of physical retailing is the ability to create an engaging multisensory experience for the customer, while the strength of digital retailing lies in its convenience and availability. [7], [8]

Table 1: Comparison Between Digital and Physical Sensory Marketing

Aspect	Physical Sensory Marketing	Digital Sensory Marketing
Sensory Stimulation	All five senses	Mainly sight and sound
Customer Interaction	Direct product experience	Virtual interaction
Emotional Engagement	Very High	Moderate to High
Product Evaluation	Physical inspection	Visual evaluation
Purchase Confidence	High	Moderate
Sensory Gap	Minimal	Significant
Technologies Used	Store ambience and product displays	AI, AR, VR, Interactive websites
Consumer Experience	Rich multisensory experience	Technology-assisted experience
Major Advantage	Trust and emotional connection	Convenience and accessibility
Major Limitations	Geographic limitation	Lack of physical sensory experience

This comparison shows that despite the great improvements achieved through technological innovations in digital sensory marketing, physical retail spaces continue to offer better multisensory experiences. However, further advancements in technology will reduce the gap and offer a more immersive experience when shopping online.

Sensory Marketing and Consumer Behaviour

The literature review has revealed that sensory marketing has considerable impact on consumer perception, emotion, attitudes and behaviour. It has been proven that sensory stimuli generate emotional responses which help enhance consumer satisfaction, increase brand attachment and generate purchase intentions. Of all the five senses of a human being, most studies are concerned with the visual and auditory stimuli since they are easy to control in a retail environment. Nevertheless, it is stressed in the literature that multiple sensory stimuli generate stronger behavioral response than single sensory stimuli.

Physical Retail Environment and Multisensory Experience

Physical brick-and-mortar stores provide consumers with total sensory input through lighting, music, fragrance, touch, and product trial. Studies have shown that the ambiance of the store plays a significant role in the consumer's mood, the length of time spent shopping, impulse buying behaviour, and purchasing satisfaction. Good smells, pleasing layout, good lighting, and proper background music facilitate emotional arousal and increase the quality perception of the product. Physical stores offer multisensory experiences, which lower purchase risk since they allow the consumers to examine the product before buying it.

Digital Sensory Marketing

The fast development of the business in the virtual world has made researchers interested in studying digital sensory marketing techniques. Research shows that the digital environment mainly stimulates the vision and hearing senses by means of the website design, pictures of products, video presentations, virtual demonstrations, and interactive interface. However, even though the above aspects facilitate customers' engagement in the digital environment, researchers admit that digital platforms cannot replicate tactile, olfactory, or gustatory sensations. [8]

Emerging Technologies in Sensory Marketing

Current literature suggests the increasing significance of AI, VR, AR, MR, IoT, and haptics in augmenting digital customer experience. The application of AI helps provide personalization of product suggestions as well as interactions with the customers using intelligent algorithms. VR and AR enable virtual shopping experience through which the consumers can see the product in advance. These technologies help bridge the sensory gap between the digital and physical world of retail business.

Customer Experience as a Mediating Variable

Experience of customers has been one of the highly researched constructs in sensory marketing literature. It is seen from previous studies that sensory inputs impact consumers' behaviour through the mechanism of customer experience. Positive customer experience produces positive emotions, builds up trust, increases perceived value and purchase intentions. Thus, experience of customers is considered to be a mediator between sensory marketing initiatives and purchase decisions of consumers. [7]

Purchase Decision

Buyer intention reflects the ultimate behavioural response of customers as a result of their cognitive processing and emotions towards sensory stimulus. Research has found that positive sensory experiences create higher buyer intentions, eliminate doubt, make brands more favourable, and promote repurchase behaviour. Physical sensory marketing creates greater buyer intentions than digital sensory marketing because physical sensory marketing allows for interaction with the product, while digital sensory marketing requires technology and imagination of the consumer.

Theoretical Foundation

Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) Theory

The Stimulus – Organism – Response (S-O-R) Theory, initially formulated by Mehrabian and Russell (1974), is considered as the main theoretical framework for this research. According to this model, stimuli in the environment have an impact on the individual's internal mental and emotional state

(organism) which further affects the behavioural response. In sensory marketing context, sensory stimuli like colour, music, scent, lighting, product touch, web design and interactive media can be considered as the stimuli from the environment. As the result of the stimuli, psychological responses occur in the form of emotions, perceptions, trust, satisfaction and customer experience. Finally, the consumer's behaviour will be influenced through purchase intention, brand preference, customer loyalty and purchase decision.

Mental Imagery Theory

Mental Imagery Theory describes the process through which consumers create sensory experiences when they lack the opportunity to interact physically with their surroundings. When customers shop on the internet, there is no chance to feel, smell or taste any product before purchasing it. Consumers can only use their imagination, past experiences, pictures of the products, videos, and comments by other users to visualize different features of the products. The theory claims that good-quality visual presentations, interactive demos, virtual reality, and augmented reality increase the power of the mental imagery of consumers.

Embodied Cognition Theory

The Embodied Cognition Theory holds that human cognition is greatly affected by one's physical experience and interactions with the physical environment. This theory states that the better one can interact physically with any product through multiple sensory inputs, the better he understands and evaluates it. When consumers interact with products in physical retail settings, they touch the product, sense the fragrance, check the texture, hear the sound, and even taste the product before buying it. These multiple sensory inputs lead to greater emotional involvement, better evaluation of the product, increased trust, and confidence in purchase.

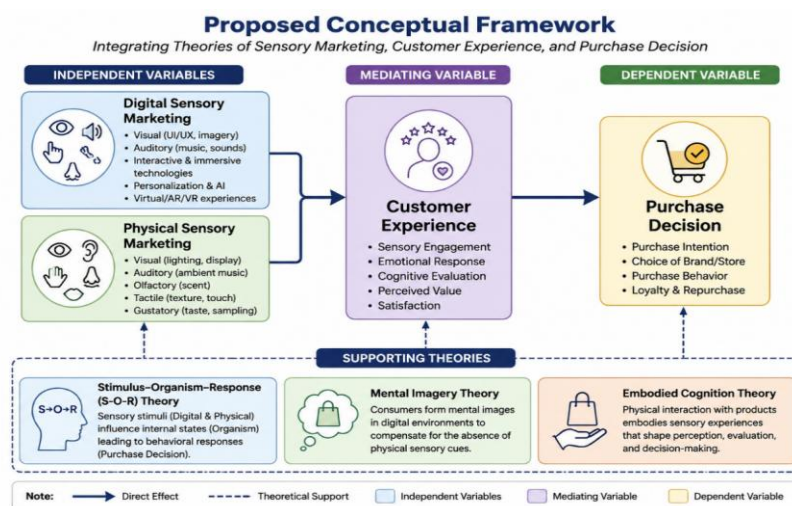
Integration of Theories

The combination of S-O-R Theory, Mental Imagery Theory and Embodied Cognition Theory offers a complete understanding of consumer behaviour in both online and offline environments. The first theory describes the general interaction of environmental stimuli and consumer reactions, the second one – compensating for the lack of sensory cues while online shopping and the third one – why tactile interactions make people feel emotionally more connected to the products and increase the purchase confidence.

Proposed Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework developed in this study integrates the three supporting theories and illustrates the relationships among the key variables.

This theory suggests that sensory stimuli affect consumer experience, which then impacts consumers' purchasing decisions. Whereas physical sensory marketing involves actual multisensory stimulation, digital sensory marketing utilizes technology and imagination to generate the same consumer experience.



Research Propositions

As this is a conceptual research paper, journals will be more interested in propositions than in hypotheses.

- P1:** Digital sensory marketing has a positive impact on customer experience.
- P2:** Physical sensory marketing has a positive impact on customer experience.
- P3:** Consumer purchase decisions are affected by customer experience.
- P4:** Customer experience moderates the effect of sensory marketing on consumer purchase decisions.
- P5:** Physical sensory marketing creates greater purchase intention compared to digital sensory marketing due to greater multisensory engagement.
- P6:** Innovations such as AI, AR, and VR decrease the sensory gap in digital environments and affect customer experience positively.

Research Methodology

This study uses a conceptual research design that is based on a thorough review and synthesis of extant literature about sensory marketing, customer experience, and consumer purchase decision. Unlike empirical research, conceptual research seeks to establish theoretical knowledge by building upon previous researches and developing an all-encompassing conceptual framework explaining the relationships among important variables. The current study will compare the effects of digital and physical sensory marketing on customer experience and purchase decisions. This study will use a qualitative review approach whereby secondary data will be gathered from scholarly journals, conference papers, books, and other academic sources. Special attention will be paid to articles published in the period from 2020 to 2026 because the conceptual framework should reflect the latest findings about sensory marketing, digital retailing, customer experience, artificial intelligence, virtual reality, and consumer behaviour.

The literature selection process was based on pre-specified inclusion and exclusion criteria. Only those English peer-reviewed journal articles that are related to sensory marketing, digital marketing, physical marketing, consumer experience, purchase decision, and the associated behavioural theories were selected for the review. Editorials, opinion pieces, replicated papers, unpublished works, and non-peer reviewed articles were not considered in order to ensure the validity of the conceptual framework. The conceptual analysis is based on Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) theory, which is backed up by Mental Imagery Theory and Embodied Cognition Theory. The theories provide explanations about how stimulus affects the consumers' thoughts and feelings resulting in behavioural actions like purchase decision. A conceptual model and research propositions have been proposed on the basis of synthesized literature regarding the association between digital sensory marketing, physical sensory marketing, consumer experience, and purchase decision.

The methodology enhances the development of theory in sensory marketing through synthesis of scattered findings in a coherent conceptual framework. This framework also sets the stage for future research whereby the suggested relationships can be tested empirically using statistical approaches such as Structural Equation Modelling (SEM).

Discussion

From the above conceptual analysis, it can be clearly noted that sensory marketing has developed into the most effective method for improving the customer experience and the purchase behaviour of consumers. Whether shopping in the brick-and-mortar environment or in the digital environment, the consumer experience will always be influenced by sensory stimulations. Nevertheless, there is a difference in the sensory stimulation in both environments. From the literature review, physical sensory marketing is the better approach in providing full multisensory experiences. Sensory marketing in physical environments stimulates all the five senses of the human body through visual merchandising, ambient music, store scents, product textures, and product sampling. The sensory experiences provide emotional engagement, increase the trust of the customers, improve product evaluations, and increase purchase confidence. The direct interaction with the products makes consumers to be more informed when making purchase decisions. On the other hand, sensory marketing in digital environment mainly includes visual and auditory sensory experiences. With the recent advancements in technologies such as AI, VR, AR, and recommendation system and interactive websites, digital platforms have become much

better. However, they cannot yet provide multisensory experiences for the customers. This phenomenon, commonly referred to as the sensory gap, remains one of the principal challenges in digital marketing.

Also, the research findings reveal that customer experience acts as an essential mediating factor between sensory marketing and purchase decisions. Sensory input does not play a key role in determining the buying behaviour of the consumer. Sensory input first affects the consumer's feelings and thoughts, and thus results in either a good or bad customer experience, leading to the consumer making purchase decisions. The finding has significant implications on the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) Theory. The S-O-R Theory states that the environment stimulus affects behaviour through internal psychological processes. In addition, the application of Mental Imagery Theory and Embodied Cognition Theory provides a better understanding of the consumer behaviour in varying retail situations. The Mental Imagery Theory helps in explaining how consumers mentally create sensory experience when shopping online while Embodied Cognition Theory focuses on the need for physical interaction.

From the discussion above, it is evident that the use of technology is helping to reduce the sensory gap gradually. Artificial Intelligence helps with personalization, Virtual Reality allows for immersive shopping experience, Augmented Reality helps to visualize products virtually, while haptic technology seeks to replicate physical touch. Although these technologies cannot entirely replace physical sensory experiences, they enhance customer engagement and purchase decisions online.

From the above, it is clear that a successful retailer should view digital and physical sensory marketing as complementary and not competing concepts. The combination of technological advancement and multisensory experience has a lot of potential to improve customer satisfaction, develop brand loyalty, and facilitate buying decisions. [8]

Findings

Based on the above comprehensive review and conceptual analysis, the research presents the following findings:

- **Finding 1:** Sensory marketing has a great impact on customer experience since it creates emotional and cognitive response among consumers irrespective of whether they engage in shopping in the physical or digital environment.
- **Finding 2:** The physical sensory marketing offers more multisensory experience compared to digital sensory marketing since consumers have the ability to interact with goods using their five senses.
- **Finding 3:** Digital sensory marketing involves only visual and audio stimulation which makes consumers use mental images and past experiences in order to compensate for lacking tactile, olfactory, and gustatory sensations.
- **Finding 4:** Customer experience works as an important mediating variable connecting sensory marketing approach with consumer decision-making process which supports the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) Theory.
- **Finding 5:** New technologies like Artificial Intelligence, Virtual Reality, Augmented Reality, and haptic technologies greatly facilitate digital customer experience and diminish the gap of sensory stimulation between online and offline shopping environments.
- **Finding 6:** Combination of digital and physical sensory marketing approaches via omnichannel retailing provides organizations with more opportunities for enhancing customer engagement and improving purchasing behaviour.
- **Finding 7:** The proposed conceptual framework helps add to the current literature on sensory marketing through the integration of three behaviour-based theories Stimulus-Organism-Response Theory, Mental Imagery Theory and Embodied Cognition Theory.

Alignment of Objectives and Findings

Research Objective	Corresponding Finding
Examine the influence of sensory marketing on consumer behaviour	Sensory marketing positively influences customer experience and purchase behaviour.
Compare digital and physical sensory marketing	Physical environments provide richer multisensory experiences, while digital environments rely mainly on visual and auditory cues.

Analyse customer experience as a mediating variable	Customer experience mediates the relationship between sensory marketing and purchase decisions.
Examine the role of emerging technologies	AI, AR, VR, and haptic technologies reduce the sensory gap and improve digital experiences.
Develop an integrated conceptual framework	The proposed framework integrates S-O-R Theory, Mental Imagery Theory, and Embodied Cognition Theory.

Theoretical Implications

This study offers various theoretical contributions to the increasing body of literature on sensory marketing, consumer behaviour, and customer experience. The first contribution is made by bringing digital sensory marketing and physical sensory marketing into one theoretical framework, thus dealing with the fragmented approaches seen in the previous research, where the focus has been on studying these settings separately. The contribution of this study to the theory of sensory marketing comes in terms of comparative perspectives.

The second theoretical contribution comes from the application of the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) Theory with the inclusion of the concept of customer experience as the primary mediating construct between sensory marketing and purchase decision.

Third, the fusion of Mental Imagery Theory and Embodied Cognition Theory adds value to current sensory marketing literature by shedding light on the unique psychological processes behind consumer behaviour both in the online as well as the offline setting. The theory of Mental Imagery provides an understanding of how consumers make up for lack of physical sensory engagement in online shopping, while the theory of Embodied Cognition emphasizes the significance of physical engagement in determining consumer behaviour.

Lastly, the above-mentioned conceptual model offers a theoretical framework for future empirical investigation. Scholars can test the above-mentioned relationships through statistical analysis such as Structural Equation Modelling (SEM).

Managerial Implications

Implications from the findings of this research paper could prove beneficial for retailers and marketers, as well as organizations, who aim at enhancing their customers' experiences and purchasing behaviors. Firstly, retail managers must understand that sensory marketing is not only about creating visually appealing stores and should involve all five senses in the process of creating positive customer experience. Physical retailers could use such elements as store layout, lighting, fragrance, music, product displays, and interactive products in order to create memorable shopping experience.

Secondly, for digital retailers, the study suggests that efforts must be made to minimize sensory limitations of online shopping by making use of technologies, such as Artificial Intelligence, Virtual Reality, Augmented Reality, interactive product visualization, and personalized recommendations. Use of high-resolution images and product videos, along with other innovative methods of creating virtual try-ons of the products, would allow for reduction of consumer uncertainty.

The study also proves the importance of using omnichannel retailing strategies which combine online and physical retailing.

Practical Implications

A practical implication of the study is its usefulness to organizations planning to use sensory marketing effectively. The customer experiences developed by physical retailers should appeal to the senses at the same time. The physical retailers should ensure a pleasant ambiance within their stores, good visual merchandising, good lighting, good smell and interactivity of product displays so as to improve the customer experiences. E-commerce businesses, on the other hand, need to continue developing digital sensory experiences using innovations. The developments like AI-based personalization of marketing messages, virtual visualization of products, interactive websites, immersive videos, and haptics can increase the customer confidence in making purchases.

Another way through which the marketing professionals can benefit from the conceptual framework developed in the paper is by using it strategically as a tool for analysing sensory marketing activities and finding opportunities for improving customer experience in the different retail forms.

Limitations of the Study

Despite all that has been stated above in the discussion, there are several weaknesses associated with the presented study that need to be highlighted. First of all, the research is conceptual and does not include empirical data based on consumer behaviour. That is why the described relationships cannot be considered as statistically proven.

Secondly, secondary data has been used in the study only, which means that the presented findings are dependent on the extent of the existing research in the area.

Thirdly, the conceptual framework includes only the customer experience as the mediating variable. Such variables as customer satisfaction, trust, perceived value, brand loyalty, perceived risk, and emotional attachment have not been considered within the proposed model.

Finally, the concept of sensory marketing has been discussed in general retail context, and no specific industries, products, consumers or cultures have been focused on.

Future Research Directions

There are many research avenues that the current study opens up for future researchers.

The concept framework developed in the study can be empirically validated by conducting future studies using quantitative approaches such as Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) and/or Partial Least Square Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM). Future comparative studies can be conducted regarding sensory marketing effectiveness across different types of retailers such as supermarkets, fashion retailing, hospitality, luxury goods, health care and online shopping.

Moderating impact of demographic factors such as age, gender, education level, economic status and cultural background on sensory marketing effectiveness is another interesting avenue for future research. Future research may consider the influence of new technologies including Artificial Intelligence, Virtual Reality, Mixed Reality, Metaverse Environment, wearables and Haptic technology on consumer experience and decision-making. Future research could also consider sensory marketing practices of different countries to understand the cultural impact on sensory perception and consumer behaviour.

Conclusion

Sensory marketing is one of the most effective techniques used for improving the experience of customers and shaping consumer purchase behaviour both in the traditional and virtual settings. The current research offers a conceptual comparison of digital and traditional sensory marketing through literature review and formulation of a unified theoretical model based on the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) Theory, Mental Imagery Theory, and Embodied Cognition Theory.

The results of the conceptual comparison reveal that sensory marketing in traditional setting ensures better sensory experience for consumers because of direct product experience, which contributes to emotional stimulation, building customer trust, and increasing purchasing confidence. On the other hand, sensory marketing in digital environment involves mainly visual and auditory stimuli and the use of mental imagery and past experience by the consumers is required to make up for lack of sensory information. Despite some limitations of the digital environment with respect to provision of full sensory experience, advanced technologies such as Artificial Intelligence, Virtual Reality, Augmented Reality, and haptic technologies contribute to the reduction of sensory gap.

The research also emphasizes the role of customer experience as the critical mediating variable between sensory marketing practices and consumer purchase decision-making. Combining several behavioural theories in one conceptual model, the study not only contributes to the theory of sensory marketing but provides valuable recommendations for marketers and retail managers. Additionally, the suggested conceptual framework can serve as a base for the development of future empirical studies of sensory marketing.

Thus, on the whole, the results obtained indicate that digital and physical sensory marketing practices are not competitive strategies but rather complement each other within the omnichannel retail ecosystem. Companies able to combine innovative technologies and multidimensional customer experience will have a greater chance of establishing closer customer relationships and making good purchase decisions.

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