

## IMPACT OF SENSORY EXPERIENCE ON BUYING BEHAVIOUR VIA EMOTIONS IN HOSPITALITY SECTOR

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### ABSTRACT

*Research examining the impact of sensory experience on consumer behaviour through emotions is not very common in Hospitality industry. In order to construct a model of buying purchasing behaviour predicated on sensory experience, this paper gathered 325 valid questionnaires from the people who have stayed in any 4 or 5-star hotel in last 6 months. By employing structural equation modeling, this study authenticates the conceptual model and establishes the substantiality of sensory experience as a precursor to purchasing behaviour. According to the findings of this paper the relationship between various elements of sensory experience and behavioural intentions is positively determined. The results of this study have significant implications both theoretically and practically. They investigate the connections between the impact of the five senses on purchasing behaviour in the hospitality industry. In the conclusion, managerial implications and research limitations are discussed.*

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**Keywords:** Sensory Experience, Emotions, Buying Behaviour, Behavioural Intentions.

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### Introduction

Engaging with consumers and creating a memorable experience can be achieved by appealing to their sensory impressions (Erenkol & Merve, 2015). Experiences comprise not just practical components, but also sensory, cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions. Customers are more inclined to generate, sustain, and return to experiences when all five of their senses are actively involved. Marketers are becoming more aware of the importance of Sensory Marketing. Krishna (2012) provided a definition of sensory marketing as a marketing strategy that actively engages the consumers' senses and has an impact on their behaviors. Sensory marketing is based on the idea that our cognitive processes are most successfully engaged and remembered when all five senses are actively activated. The five senses include the abilities of sight, hearing, touch, taste, and smell (Krishna, 2012). Prior research has examined the main effects of these cues on customers' behaviors. Different stimuli, including as music, scent, ambiance, touch, and flavor, have been found to influence customers' perception and buying behavior (Krishna & Schwarz, 2014).

Companies are discovering that by involving consumers through several sensory touch points, beyond the usual channels of sight or hearing, they can enhance customers' emotional connection to their products and brands. Each individual sense possesses the capacity to elicit potent memories and emotions, which thereafter have the potential to impact both trivial and momentous decisions. Boyle-Brayfield (2008) suggests that a company that effectively engages many senses has a higher likelihood of successfully selling its products. Sensory marketing integrates customer experiences and emotions into the marketing process, setting it apart from conventional marketing strategies. The multimodal strategies strive to go beyond simply providing usefulness and value by evoking a deep human connection with objects. The aim is to rectify the shortcomings of conventional marketing techniques.

Sensory marketing has been prevalent in several industries including hospitality, vehicles, airplanes, casinos, retail stores, textile, leather manufacturing, skincare, and cosmetics, working at different levels (Kim et al., 2020).

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In the hospitality industry, there is fierce rivalry, and the ability to keep customers and gain their loyalty largely depends on the quality of their experience. Sensory marketing is a deliberate approach that utilizes consumers' senses to shape their perceptions, evaluations, and actions. It entails utilizing vision, hearing, olfaction, gustation, and tactile sensations to generate a multi-sensory encounter that amplifies the overall consumer engagement with a brand or service. This strategy surpasses conventional marketing approaches by striving to establish a more engaging and unforgettable encounter for consumers.

### Relevance in the Hospitality Industry

The hospitality industry, encompassing establishments such as hotels, restaurants, and other service-oriented enterprises, is intrinsically dedicated to the creation of favorable experiences for patrons. Sensory marketing is highly applicable in this industry due to multiple factors:

- **Enhanced Customer Experience:** By engaging multiple senses, hospitality businesses can create a richer, more engaging environment. This can lead to increased satisfaction and a stronger emotional connection to the brand.
- **Differentiation:** In a highly competitive market, sensory marketing provides a unique way for hospitality businesses to differentiate themselves. A well-crafted sensory experience can set a brand apart from its competitors.
- **Emotional Connection:** Sensory elements can evoke emotions and memories, creating a deeper bond between the guest and the brand. This emotional connection can lead to increased customer loyalty.
- **Memorability:** Experiences that engage multiple senses are more likely to be remembered. This can lead to positive word-of-mouth and repeat business.
- **Perceived Value:** A multi-sensory experience can enhance the perceived value of a service, justifying higher prices and improving overall profitability.
- **Behavioral Influence:** Sensory cues can influence guest behavior, encouraging them to spend more time and money within the establishment. For example, pleasant scents can increase dwell time in a hotel lobby, and appealing visuals can enhance the perceived quality of a restaurant.

### Application of Sensory Marketing in Hospitality Sector

Sensory marketing's theoretical framework can be utilized across all facets of the hotel business to amplify guest experiences.

- **Sight:** The visual components, including design, color schemes, and lighting, are essential in establishing a hospitable and visually appealing atmosphere. For example, employing warm hues and gentle illumination can establish a comfortable ambiance within a hotel lobby.
- **Sound:** Background music, ambient sounds, and acoustics have the ability to impact the emotional state and actions of individuals present. Soft, calming melodies at a spa can facilitate relaxation, while vibrant music in a bar might establish a bustling atmosphere.
- **Smell:** Aromas have the ability to elicit emotions and trigger memories, making them potent instruments for crafting a remarkable experience. Utilizing distinctive fragrances in hotel lobbies or rooms might augment the overall perception of the company.
- **Taste:** The food and drinks provided by hospitality establishments have a crucial role in enhancing the sensory experience. Exquisite, delectable cuisine and beverages have the potential to make a lasting impact on guests.
- **Touch:** The tactile characteristics, such as the surface feel of furniture, fabrics, and amenities, have the potential to impact guests' evaluations of the level of excellence and comfort. Opulent, plush tangibles can heighten the feeling of pleasure and contentment.

By strategically integrating these sensory elements, hospitality businesses can create a holistic and immersive experience that resonates with guests, leading to increased satisfaction, loyalty, and positive word-of-mouth (Kim et al., 2020).

### Literature Review

According to Hulten et al. (2022), the sensory experiences of seeing, feeling, tasting, hearing, and smelling an offering, together with intuitive and impression components, are significant in our

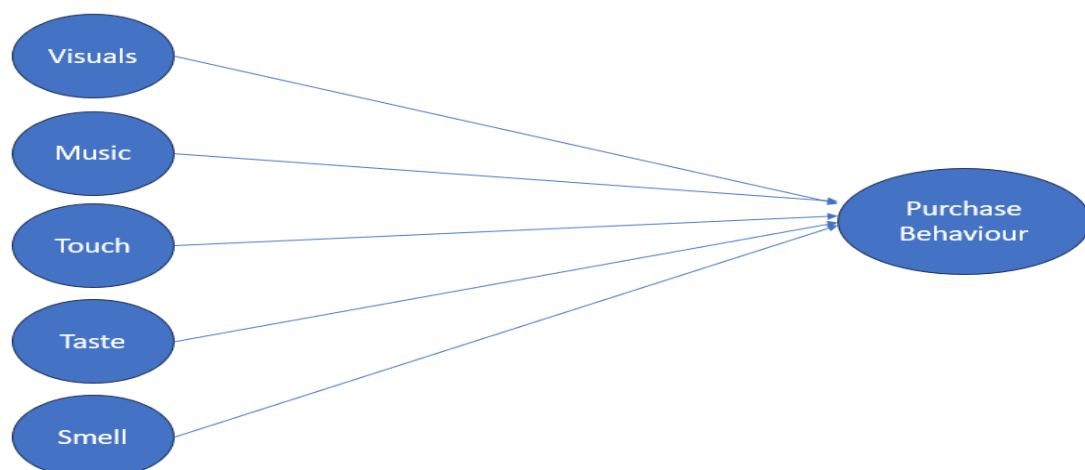
comprehension. The perception of these jobs confers a significant advantage in today's economy (Fong et al., 2023). According to Shehata & Alaswadi, (2022) our senses reflect our everyday experiences and serve to fulfill our needs and wants. In recent times, behavioural economists have begun to tackle these requirements by employing sensory marketing, which often elicits a positive emotional reaction in order to induce a shift in real behavior (Chen et al., 2021). According to Saribas & Demir, (2022), sensory marketing refers to the use of consumers' senses to influence their perception, judgment, and behavior. From a managerial standpoint, sensory marketing can utilize the environmental factors at the point of sale to create subconscious cues that shape consumers' perceptions of abstract concepts such as product sophistication or quality (Seo, 2020). Alyahya & McLean, (2022) have identified various sensory marketing elements that contribute to the overall atmosphere of selling points. These elements include tactile factors (such as materials and temperature), gustatory factors, olfactory factors (such as ambient scents and product smells), visual factors (such as colors, lights, and design), sonorous factors (such as background music and ambient sounds), intuition factors (such as peace, security, and care in a hotel), and impression factors (emotions, feelings, and experience). These factors are important for attracting and satisfying different categories of customers (Haase et al., 2022). Pelet et al., (2021) asserted that the seven sensory marketing factors offer a fresh perspective on the marketing mix and its connection to the sensory experiences of individuals. The objective is to develop a cohesive collection of hints that together fulfill or beyond the customer's expectations (Elder & Krishna, 2022). Zha et al. (2022) found that sensory marketing serves three main purposes, engaging consumers with the product or service, promoting purchases and fostering loyalty between customers and hotels, and influencing the consumer's perception of the hotel's reputation and creating differentiation in their mind (Hulten, 2020).

In their study, Kim et al. (2020) found that different senses have varying degrees of relevance in human learning. Visual perception accounts for 83% of a person's perception of new information, while touch accounts for 1.5%, smell accounts for 3.5%, hearing accounts for 11%, and taste accounts for 1%. Perumal et al., (2021) demonstrated that by being cognizant of this information, it is feasible to examine the influence of human senses on the comprehension and acquisition of particular subjects, such as facts, items, and locations (Pine and Gilmore, 2013). According to Shahid et al., (2022) and Aliumah et al. (2022), certain sensory aspects have the ability to produce remarkable effects, such as inducing relaxation, increasing energy, promoting calmness, boosting mood, and influencing decision making and subsequent behavior. Gretzel and Fesenmaier (2010) concurred with Krishna et al., 2016 on the notion that the greater number of senses involved in an event, the more impactful and remembered it might be.

#### Objective

- To investigate the effects of sensory factors (Visuals, Music, Touch, Taste and Smell) on Behavioural Intentions.

#### Conceptual Model



### Hypothesis

The study focuses on several Sensory Marketing elements that have a positive influence on buyers. Considering this, the following hypothesis statements were developed in accordance with the literature research.

- H<sub>1</sub>:** Music positively influences the Purchase Behaviour of guests in hotels  
**H<sub>2</sub>:** Sight positively influences the Purchase Behaviour of guests in hotels  
**H<sub>3</sub>:** Smell positively influences the Purchase Behaviour of guests in hotels  
**H<sub>4</sub>:** Taste positively influences the Purchase Behaviour of guests in hotels  
**H<sub>5</sub>:** Touch positively influences the Purchase Behaviour of guests in hotels

### Research Methodology

The work utilizes quantitative research methodology and employs a descriptive research design. The main data was gathered via a well-organized questionnaire from patrons staying at luxury hotels in Delhi NCR. The size of the sample was 325. Individuals were chosen based on judgment and feasibility. Data collecting was conducted by individuals who have recently stayed at a 4 or 5-star hotel during the past 6 months. The survey instrument's reliability is assessed using the Cronbach's alpha approach. The reliability test examines the extent to which the scores of respondents on each attribute are correlated with their ratings on the other qualities (Bryman and Bell, 2007). Typically, a coefficient alpha of 0.75 or higher is deemed adequate and provides a reliable measure of construct reliability (Nunnally, 1978). The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the survey questions in this study is 0.86, providing evidence that the survey instrument is both valid and reliable, demonstrating a high level of internal consistency.

### Measurements

The scales and measuring items utilized in this study were validated based on the literature review. Every item was assessed on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 5 indicating strong agreement to 1 indicating significant disagreement. The independent variables' items (Sensory marketing elements Measures) depended on (Jang & Lee, 2019). scale. This revised scale consisted of twenty-items, divided into five dimensions. All the dimensions (Sight; Smell; sound; taste and touch) consisted of four-items. While the dependent variables' (Purchasing Behaviour) items consisted 5 items adapted from Zeithaml, Berry, and Parasuraman (1996).

### Data Analysis

The data was analysed using the two-step technique (Thakkar, 2020), in which the measurement was first validated and then the structural model was evaluated. Using PLS-SEM 4.0 the latent variables were tested to determine the adequacy of the conceptual model by representing the constructs of the model and testing the hypotheses.

### Results

To test the reliability of the constructs, the study used Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (CR). All the CRs were higher than the recommended value of 0.700 (Wasko and Faraj, 2005). A Cronbach's Alpha with value higher than 0.7 is considered as reliable in comparison with values lower than 0.7 (Nunnally, 1978, George and Mallery, 2019). Cronbach's alpha of each construct exceeds the .700 threshold. In our model all our Cronbach Alpha is above .700 and Composite Reliability is above the threshold level. The minimum acceptable AVE is 0.50 – an AVE of 0.50 or higher indicates the construct explains 50 percent or more of the indicators' variance that make up the construct (Hair et al., 2022). In our model for all the AVE are found to be greater than .5 hence the Convergent Validity is established.

**Table1: Reliability, Composite Reliability and AVE**

	<b>Cronbach's Alpha</b>	<b>Composite Reliability (rho_c)</b>	<b>Average Variance Extracted (AVE)</b>
Music	0.889	0.897	0.710
Purchasing Behaviour	0.900	0.912	0.732
Sight	0.756	0.863	0.712
Smell	0.879	0.891	0.672
Taste	0.899	0.912	0.710
Touch	0.901	0.763	0.652

**Table 2: Discriminant Validity**

	Music	Purchasing Behaviour	Sight	Smell	Taste	Touch
Music						
Purchasing Behaviour	0.887					
Sight	0.762	0.772				
Smell	0.761	0.741	0.772			
Taste	0.695	0.659	0.741	0.746		
Touch	0.633	0.653	0.659	0.741	0.732	

**Model Fit**

The Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) is an index of the average of standardized residuals between the observed and the hypothesized covariance. The acceptable range for the SRMR index is between 0 and 0.08 (Hu and Bentler, 1999). As reflected in Table 3, In our model the SRMR is below the threshold level. NFI is an incremental measure of goodness of fit for a statistical model, which is not affected by the number of parameters/variables in the model. For our model, NFI values above 0.80 are considered as acceptable (Byrne, 1998). In our model the NFI is close to 1 hence acceptable.

**Table 3: Model Fit**

	Saturated Model	Estimated Model
SRMR	0.525	0.502
NFI	0.853	0.835

Table 4 reflects, there is a significant effect of the independent variables, sight, music, smell, taste and touch on Behavioural Intentions of the customers. Since the p- value of all direct relations in H4, H2, H3, and H4is less than 0.005 significant level, there is sufficient evidence to conclude that the effect of Music, Smell, Sight, Taste and Touch on Behavioural Intentions is significant and all the proposed hypothesis are supported.

**Table 4: Path Analysis**

	Original Sample (O)	T statistics	P values	Hypothesis Supported
H1: Music -> PB	0.132	2.741	0.004	Supported
H2: Sight -> PB	0.562	6.256	0.000	Supported
H3: Smell -> PB	0.102	2.018	0.000	Supported
H4: Taste -> PB	0.312	3.521	0.000	Supported
H5: Touch -> PB	0.133	2.989	0.002	Supported

**Conclusions and Recommendations**

The findings have led to the following conclusions and recommendations. The study's results demonstrated that the sensory marketing components (Sight, Smell, Sound, Taste, and Touch) had a positive impact on customers' purchasing behavior as a separate factor. The validity of hypotheses H1, H2, H3, H4, and H5 was shown. Otterbring (2021) concurs with these findings, stating that customers' purchasing intents are enhanced by the appeal of the five senses towards a specific product or brand, hence influencing their decision to make a purchase. Therefore, sensory marketing is a crucial aspect of modern marketing since studies indicate that organizations that effectively utilize this method have a significant influence on customer behavior and are more likely to produce positive outcomes. Subjecting them to sensory inputs elicits pleasurable sensations, hence impacting their actions and behavior. This is corroborated by Hultén et al., (2013), in which firms have wholeheartedly adopted sensory marketing as a means to elevate product sales to a higher level. The hospitality industry in Delhi NCR has become highly competitive. The research provided theoretical insights into the anticipated influence of hotels implementing sensory marketing strategies on consumers' buying behavior. Thus, this study serves as a valuable contribution to the existing body of knowledge on marketing and customer behaviors and attitudes. In addition, the study has made practical contributions and engaged in a discussion regarding the intersection of hotels and customer psychology. Given the limited amount of research and empirical data connecting marketing with behavioral and psychological sciences in relation to customers. Therefore, it is crucial to implement novel tactics in order to gain a competitive edge over rivals and offer

clients distinctive experiences. Commercial ambitions can alter the dimensions of sight, sound, smell, touch, and taste. According to this study, managers and owners of retail chain outlets should assess the cleanliness, fragrance, illumination, and interior design of hotels to align with customers' opinions and perspectives. The fragrance employed in hotels must be alluring. Customers should have the ability to effortlessly navigate and utilize the amenities provided by the hotels. Managers must examine the tactile experience of hotels to ensure that clients feel comfortable, encouraged to explore further, and inclined to trust and again. Playing music is advised to establish a calming atmosphere.

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