

# Multisensory Marketing - Building Sustainability Perspective in Diverse Sectors

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## ABSTRACT

Synchronic studies in marketing propose that sensory stimulus, like colour, lighting effects, backdrop music, ambient scents, or upholstery's texture affect consumers' evaluation of the milieu, the wares presented, and affect consumer behaviour (e.g., approximate amount spent, time spent at a store). A customer is frequently attracted towards a brand based on his sensory experience. In toto, the unexpurgated world is experienced through multiple senses (Lindstrom & Kotler, 2005). Ingenious brands are discovering means to captivate the entire consumer senses to fortify their brand experience, by amalgamating every sense into the marketing strategy; this approach is called Sensory Marketing. Sensory branding is based on the idea that we are most likely to form, retain, and revisit memory when all five senses are engaged. Many companies are discovering that when they engage consumers with multiple sensory touch points—not just the traditional sensory channels of sight or hearing—they can enhance customers' emotional connection with their products and brands. The multisensory strategies seek to go beyond delivering functionality and value to evoking significant personal identification with products. It aims to fill in the lacuna of the conventional marketing. Technology is one of the main factors driving sensory marketing to success. Sensory Marketing has made its mark in multiple fields like Automobiles, Airlines, Hospitality, Casinos, Retail stores, Textile, Leather production, Skincare and Cosmetics at multiple levels.

The following are a few examples for multisensory applications: 74% of Europeans and 46% of American recognise the Nokia ringtone (Lindstrom, 2005); Ford has a specific branded aroma since 2000; 27% of US consumers and 37% of Europeans consider Ford has a distinct smell. (Lindstrom, 2005); United Airlines has adapted a famous composition, George Gershwin's Rhapsody in Blue, and personalised it; Restaurants play slower music as it creates extended dining hours, increasing 29% of average bill according to an experiment; Heinz launched EZ Squirt Blastin, Green Ketchup in 2001. They sold over 10 million bottles in the first 7 months. That is the highest sales peak in the history of Heinz, all because of a simple colour adjustment. This paper deals with use of sensory marketing in various sectors and its potential to develop as a sustainability strategy.

**Keyword:** Sensory Marketing, Technology, Multisensory Marketing, Experiential Marketing.

## INTRODUCTION

Due to environmental dynamism and competitiveness, the struggle for survival and succeeding in business has become more difficult and challenging especially in an age when the consumer has so many choices. Suffering loss of a valued customer to a competitor can have significant consequence on profitability and growth. Hence, businesses have shifted their focus from customer acquisition to customer retention. Hence many companies are focusing and directing their energies and efforts toward satisfying the customer.

Customer satisfaction is estimated to be one of the most significant criteria for customer loyalty (Heskett *et al.*, 1994). In the present days, increasing customer satisfaction has emerged as the main point of convergence of many firms to enhance recurring business and benefit from positive word-of-mouth, thus increasing long-term profitability. Marketing and external communications help build the brand, but nothing is more powerful than the customers' actual experiences with the service.

## Earlier Approaches

The traditional marketing with its marketing mix governed the marketing strategies for a long period, focusing on

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placement of the product at the best possible price. The possibilities with services are not alike; companies must acclimatise with new marketing strategies to be able to sustain in business. When the services are invisible, the firm must build a promise and make the clients feel secure. These mutual relations become important, and help the firm to focus on the client's needs instead of the firm's own interests.

### Contemporary Approaches

Contemporary approach in marketing is relationship marketing which focuses on the consumer, the business marketing or industrial marketing with focus on an organisation or institution, and the social marketing with its focus on benefits to the society. This approach attempts to perfect the segmentation strategies employed by the traditional marketing. This enables targeting the market more precisely, and this is labeled as personalised marketing or one-to-one marketing. The culture in the contemporary society is progressively becoming more individualised and experience-based, with copious comparable brands, manufactured goods and services. This is a welcoming initiation towards a fresh marketing epoch. The functional attributes or the product features are not enough to fascinate, sustain the consumer's interest, and persuade the consumers buying behaviour or to retain the customers.

Experiential marketing part of the contemporary marketing approach integrates the elements of emotions, logic and general thought processes to bond with the consumers. Experiential marketing aims to establish an association with the customers so that they respond to the product offerings, on the basis of both emotional and rational response levels. Experiential marketing appeals to multiple senses; it aims to tap that special place in the consumers' mind which inspires thoughts concerning comfort and pleasure, along with the sense of practicality.

Personal experiences facilitate people to bond with a brand and enable intelligent and informed purchasing decisions. Since experiential marketing bonds with the consumers at copious points, it perfectly suits the contemporary sales and marketing strategies. When done appropriately, it's the most prevailing tool to win brand loyalty.

Sensory marketing is a component of experiential marketing. It uses the customer's experiences lived and

feelings in this course. These experiences are not only functional in dimension but also sensorial, emotional, cognitive, behavioural, and relational. According to this strategy the customers behave according to their impulses and emotions, more than their reasoning. As reported by Rieunier (2002), the sensory marketing approach tries to fill in the deficiencies of the traditional marketing which is too rational. Often used in brand-development and tactical marketing efforts, multi-sensory marketing goes beyond just sight and sound (the typical marketing focuses) to create experiences that can be touched, heard, seen, felt, tasted, and smelt.

The evolving transformation in the market from the mass marketing concept to relationship marketing approach to sensory marketing which is a vital part of experiential marketing illustrates its significance to firms, consultants, researchers and students to connect to all the human senses deeper than the mass marketing and relationship marketing approaches. Synchronic studies in marketing propose that sensory stimulus, as colour, lighting effects, backdrop music, ambient scents, or upholstery's texture, affect the consumer's evaluation of the milieu, the wares presented, and affect the consumer's behaviour (e.g., approximate amount spent, time spent at a store). The customer is frequently attracted towards a brand based on his sensory experience. In toto, the unexpurgated world is experienced through multiple senses (Lindstrom & Kotler, 2005). Our senses link our memory to the right emotions. In this regard, visual and olfactory senses emerge to be the most influential of all the senses. Multisensory marketing involves several human senses in the marketing process.

As reported by Kahn, consulting sensory marketing is the purposeful design and deployment of the interaction between the senses in order to stimulate a consumer's relationship with a brand; and to foster a lasting emotional connection that optimises brand loyalty. The sensory and multisensory marketing approaches have come to stay; very few studies are available regarding the reciprocal effect of backdrop music and ambience scent. Both these senses display that the congruity of sensory stimulus is imperative in stirring up positive customer reactions. Lately the marketers have commenced to theorize the multi-sensory customer experience in the hospitality industry. However, experiential literature sustaining the sensory academic motion is inadequate.

The proposed research adds to the much needed literature on the multi-sensory customer experience in various

industries by exploring communications between multiple sensory modalities, like ambience, smell, backdrop music, visual stimulus such as colour, lighting and accessibility of tactile information on cuisines, life style and hospitality.

## LITERATURE REVIEW OF SENSORY MARKETING

### Visual Marketing

Sight is one of the most seductive senses often dominating the rest; consequently it is the most employed sensory stimulus used in traditional marketing. Studies have revealed that an individual who is exposed to a product would have a preference over similar choices, even though he cannot actually remember seeing the product (Bornstein, 1987).

### Auditory Marketing

Together with sight, sound is used as the traditional element in brand-building process (Martin Lindstrom, 2005). As a result of the possibilities that affect store atmosphere and brand image through emotions, having an ambient sound at the point of purchase has, during the last years, become a must (Rieunier, 2009). Music is a powerful tool for evoking emotions; in effect, when listening to music endorphins are released, which generates sensations of pleasure (Gobé, 2001). Because of these positive feelings resulting from the endorphins, using sound as an ambience enhancer can be a very powerful way to bond customers emotionally to a brand (Schmitt & Simonson, 1997). Music can be used to affect the buying behaviour of consumers in the desired direction (Rieunier, 2009) and can therefore be seen as a device used for constructing brand identity (Gobé, 2001).

### Olfactory Marketing

The sense of smell emotionally affects human beings up to 75% more than any other sense. Studies illustrate that smell of a product and its sales environment is more essential than sight and sound during the buying process (Harrop, 2009). In 1932 Laird found a positive link between the perceived quality and the use of scent (Bone & Jantrania, 1992). In fact a brand specific odour

is likely to evoke connections to the brand and strengthen the brand identity (Schmitt & Simonson, 1997).

### Gustative Marketing

Taste offers the most specific function of any of the five human senses. In effect, different tastes are distinguished by various combinations and a more sophisticated sense of smell (Lindstrom, 2005). A person can be exposed to aroma without including the taste but it is practically impossible to taste something without smelling it (Lindstrom, 2005), something that can be experienced when eating a delicious meal while having a flu. The link between these senses is especially clear when people are asked to describe a brand involving both the taste and the smell aspect (Lindstrom, 2005). Due to the scientific advancements, the sense of taste is a well mastered and has been exploited by the producer in order to customize the produce according to the regional tastes and preference. For example, in Germany the customers prefer a sweet and salty mix, whereas in Britain softly sour is preferred (Célier, 2004).

### Tactile Marketing

Less marketing consideration is given to the sense of touch, though it engages a greater area compared to any other sense. As a result, the tactile sense improves the customer's brand experience by giving information about the brand's sensory value like the touch of the store's door, the sensitivity of walking on floor or the sensation of touching an exclusive leather (Gobé, 2001). The weight of cutleries, the softness of napkin affects the perception of the customer. The touch is a major determinant of the well-being sensation.

## MULTISENSORY MARKETING – APPLICATIONS IN VARIOUS SECTORS

The main difference between an experience and the sensory experience is the brand's ability to penetrate into the inner core of their customers. A supreme sensory experience is a decomposition of an experience where the firm's marketing activities are absorbed by the customers through their five senses. To maximize the impact, the customers' senses should be engrossed and

should be positioned at the center of sensory marketing. A neurological condition where two or more senses are connected, linked, and stimulated is called the sensory interplay, or the analogy of senses. This interplay of the senses contributes to the synergies that often give the customers a deeper holistic experience with a brand.

The presence of multisensory marketing in various sectors, illustrates the emergence of a new epoch in marketing, in which the five senses are at the center of a firm's marketing strategy and tactics. For this reason it becomes more important for the firms whether selling traditional customer goods or services, to affect and influence their customers in new and provocative ways to seize their human senses.

As early as the 1970s Kotler (1974) argued that the atmosphere of a place can be more influential than the product itself, underlining that the atmospherics can be viewed as the primary product. Store atmospherics are said to affect customer's behaviour through its interaction with their perception (Puccinelli *et al.*, 2009) and the thought of atmospherics is to create a positive experience that influences the customer's perception, allowing them to expect positive things, including the possibility to try new things (Wanger, 2002). Store atmospherics is defined as "...an effort to design buying environments to produce specific emotional effects in the buyer that enhance his purchase probability" (Kotler, 1974) and concerns environmental cues that can have a potential effect on humans behaviour as well their perception (Smith & Burns, 1996). Given below are examples of how different sectors have used their atmospheric dimensions to create positive influential experience for their customers.

### Prada

Prada is an Italian luxury fashion house, specialised in ready-to-wear, leather and fashion accessories, shoes, luggage, and perfumes, and was founded in 1913 by Mario Prada. According to 'Brand Sense' by Martin Lindstrom, in 2002 Prada revolutionised dressing rooms through multisensory in its Soho store in New York City, where it installed smart closets. Smart closets scan the individual electronic chip-based clothing tags and send the garment information to an interactive touch screen in the cubicle. The customer can then use the screen to select other sizes,

colours, or fabrics. The screen also displays video footage of the garment being worn on the Prada catwalk. Retail and fashion are merged to form an entertainment experience, leveraging technology that communicates through more senses. The microchips are able to identify an "anti-colour clash," which informs the customer whether a new garment would match their existing clothes. Once the item is purchased, a chip would tell the customers then the way to take care of it.

### Abercrombie & Fitch

Abercrombie & Fitch, also known as A&F, is an American retailer that focuses on casual wear for customers aged 18 to 22, and is headquartered in New Albany, Ohio. It has over 300 locations in the United States, and is expanding internationally. According to 'Sensory Marketing', by Bertil Hulten, Niklas Broweus & Marcus van Dijk, the signature sound at Abercrombie & Fitch is expressed through famous songs that have been mixed to create the right atmosphere in their service landscape. A heavy bass represented in every song characterizes the firm's music. The music played is very loud and gives the impression of a night club. The songs are mixed to build up the expectation that something more is under way. There are no gaps between the tracks, and therefore the tempo and sound pressure are constant in the store. Customers like the music, and many dance in tune to it. Employees also dance, which gives the relaxed feeling of a party and "living it up."

### QSD

QSD maker of maternity and post-maternity undergarments, wanted to set itself apart from the competition, it looked for a unique packaging solution, and found it with Transparent Packaging. According to 'Unique Scented Packaging Drives Apparel Brand Recognition', by Jennifer Dublino, Scent Marketing Digest, the Canadian based Transparent Packaging company designed a hexagonal package and encapsulated a nice fragrance to the outside of the carton to associate with the product which set them apart. The company uses two different fragrances for its packages: baby powder and fresh cotton. Scent is applied through a scented varnish and is released when the package is handled.

## Scents as Femininity and Masculinity

This example from a clothes shop illustrates scents as an expression for femininity and masculinity. According to L. Tischlerin 'Smells like Brand Spirit', in Fast company in 2005, a scent of vanilla was added to the women's department and a spicy kind of honey scent to the men's department. The scents had a major impact on the customers – the sales almost doubled in both the women's department and men's department. However, when the scents were switched between the two departments, the customers spent less money than average.

## Nike

Nike, Inc. is an American multinational corporation that is engaged in the design, development and worldwide marketing and selling of footwear, apparel, equipment, accessories, and services. It is one of the world's largest suppliers of athletic shoes and apparel and a major manufacturer of sports equipment. According to 'Brand Sense' by Martin Lindstrom, in an experiment conducted, two identical pairs of Nike running shoes were placed in two separate, but identical, rooms. One room was infused with a mixed floral scent and the other was not. Test subjects inspected the shoes in each room and then answered a questionnaire. 84 percent of the customers overwhelmingly preferred the shoes displayed in the room with the fragrance and also estimated the value of the "scented" shoes on average to be \$10.33 higher than the pair of shoes in the unscented room.

## Schick Men's Razor

Schick is a brand of safety razors by Wilkinson Sword, a subsidiary of Energizer Holdings. According to 'Schick Uses Scent to Give Men's Razor a Competitive Edge' by Andrew Adam Newman, The New York Times, Schick razor introduced the Xtreme3 Refresh, which had a scent reminiscent of just coming out of the shower, with the bracing notes of spearmint, citrus, and rosemary. The scent was embedded in the razor's rubber handle. The trend then had been towards more scented personal care products for men, and the razor followed the suit. When testing the product before launch, researchers found that 70% among those who noticed the scent, accepted to buy the razor, indicating that the smell influenced men

on a subconscious level. Schick scented the razor, used packaging featuring a scratch n sniff patch and also used ambient scenting at "refresh stations". Part of Schick's marketing campaign focused on the first time shavers, hoping that the scent in the razor would bind the young shavers to the brand throughout the years as the scent evokes their positive memories of becoming a man.

## Lucky Strike Cigarette

Lucky Strike is an American brand of cigarette owned by the British American Tobacco groups. Often referred to as "Luckies", Lucky Strike was the top selling cigarette in the United States during the 1930s. According to 'Brand Sense' by Martin Lindstrom, in 1942 Lucky Strike struck a problem. During the Second World War chromium, an element essential to the green ink on their labels, was in short supply. Around the same time the American troops invaded North Africa, Lucky Strike then released its new pack of cigarette with red colour, along with the slogan "Lucky Strike has gone to war!" Six weeks later Lucky Strike sales were up by 38 percent.

## Louis Vuitton

Louis Vuitton Malletier, commonly referred to as Louis Vuitton, is a French fashion house founded in 1854 by Louis Vuitton. The label's LV monogram appears on most of its products, ranging from luxury trunks and leather goods to ready-to-wear, shoes, watches, jewellery, accessories, sunglasses, and books. Louis Vuitton is one of the world's leading international fashion houses; for six consecutive years (2006-2012) Louis Vuitton has been named the world's most valuable luxury brand. According to 'Brand Sense' by Martin Lindstrom, all of the three hundred Louis Vuitton stores across the globe have an identical display in the shop front window. Each month, on exactly the same day, the design is changed according to the global manual of window dressing. Everything from the door handles, the wall texture to the packaging is carefully controlled. The LVMH group places all its emphasis on the visuals.

## Tiffany

Tiffany, the New York jeweller's name has been synonymous with luxury, exclusivity, and authenticity

since 1837, its jewellery is presented in a robin's-egg-blue box, which is their brand statement. According to 'Customer Sense - How the 5 Senses Influence Buying Behaviors' by Aradhana Krishna, Tiffany manages to impart magic and integrity through their packaging alone. Authentic Tiffany boxes and pouches have become marketable items, fetching up to \$40 on auction sites. Tiffany's delicate blue forms the basis of the store's colour scheme: it's the colour of the catalogues, their advertisements, and their shopping bags. No matter how much money one may offer Tiffany, one cannot buy a box from them. The ironclad rule of the company is that boxes (or pouches) leave the store only if they contain an item that's been purchased there.

### ASDA Grocery Chain

ASDA Stores Ltd. (stylised as ASDA) is a British supermarket chain which retails food, clothing, general merchandise, toys and financial services. According to 'Brick & Mortar Shopping in the 21st Century', Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Britain's ASDA grocery chain took the wrappers off several brands of toilet paper, inviting customers to feel for themselves, resulting in a 50% increase in sales.

### Bloomingdale's

Bloomingdale's is an upscale chain of department stores owned by Macy's, Inc. According to 'Just browsing at the mall? That's what you think' by Fetterman Mindy and Jayne O'Donnell, Bloomingdale's which is often associated with style and innovation, carefully selected and strategically used scents like baby powder in the baby section, suntan lotion near the bathing suits, lilacs in lingerie, and cinnamon and pine scents during the holidays in various departments. The purpose was to influence the smell experience of their customers and strengthen their brand image in the long term.

### Digital Flex Media

Digital Flex Media, a leader in CD and DVD replication disks and technology, announced the launch of a line of Rub 'n Smell discs. The idea was to help businesses, marketers and advertisers cost-effectively connect and influence their target markets with scent marketing. The

scent was incorporated into the ink and varnish used to coat the company's disks. Scents like fresh fruit, flowers, coffee, pizza, chocolate, and custom scents and fragrances supplied by clients were used on the disks. According to the company, the scent activated when rubbed and lasted for a few seconds each time. These disks could retain their scent for years and the intensity of the smell could be controlled by scenting a larger or smaller area. Their marketing research department discovered that when given a choice between two similar foods or beverage products, 81% of the customers preferred the one that they could smell and see rather than the products which they could just see, resulting that scent does not just alter the customer behaviour, but it profoundly shifts their behaviour in one direction giving benefit from this fact and a definite, lasting edge in a competitive marketplace. ([www.digitalflexmedia.com](http://www.digitalflexmedia.com))

### Scented Children's Book

According to 'Author Debuts Scented Children's Book', by Jennifer Dublino, Scent Marketing Digest, Children's author Margaret Hyde came up with an idea about a dog smelling colours and decided to add actual scents to the book. She wanted to use scents that would be safe and hypoallergenic for children, and settled for essential oils. The oils were dispersed in a "Press 2 Smell" technology developed by Hyde that holds the scent until pressed. Each scent could be pressed up to 150,000 times. More than 25,000 copies were sold and won multiple Moonbeam Children's Book Awards. In addition to the general children's market, the books had a great reception from learning disabled and autistic children, as research has shown that they react very positively to multi-sensory experiences and are able to learn better when more senses are used.

### Florida Hospital

Florida Hospital's Seaside Center in the United States has created environments conducive to the well-being and health of patients. To achieve a smell experience, the hospital used machines that circulated scents of the sea, coconut, and vanilla. The scent of vanilla permeates the radiology department, because it is felt to make people feel less claustrophobic. One reason that the hospital chose to use scent machines was to reduce the number of cancellations from patients waiting for X-rays. The

hospital wanted to use scents to create an environment that was stimulating and pleasant and at the same time relaxing and soothing for the patients. The expectation of the hospital here was that the use of olfactory scents would make patients stay and undergo the treatment. The results were dramatic. The cancellation rate dropped 50% and the need for sedation during MRI's dropped from 6% of patients to 2%. (www.sensorymax.com)

The importance of scents in a service landscape can be taken from a grocery store in Stockholm, Sweden. According to 'Sensory Marketing', by Bertil Hulten, Niklas Broweus & Marcus van Dijk, Stockholm Grocery Store used an artificial scent of oranges in its fruits and vegetables section for a limited period, which led to a noticeable increase in the sale of its oranges. A high-end Canadian blue jean company introduced scented jeans, called "Weird Guy Scratch n' Sniff Raspberry Scented" whose scent lasts for five washes. Auditory sensory marketing strategy was implemented by Lindex, a Swedish fashion chain, known for its fast fashion clothing for women, teenagers and children, by using a jingle to enhance the sound experience for its customers and to increase their recognition level. (ibid)

## CONCLUSION

Sensory marketing is the future of marketing and is exploding. Technology very tactfully and rightly makes sensory integration more practical and affordable for the marketers looking out for logical new frontiers; as business broadens the horizon of their products, offering the sensory marketing strategies enables the customers to try out a new product before buying it. The sensory cues of auditory and olfactory senses facilitate companies to build superior emotional connections to their brands. Perfect use of the auditory sense is the easiest way to tap the market for a brand looking forward to try out sensory marketing. The logic is simple; the more accessibility you provide, the greater is your chance to connect to the customers. The senses wholly influence our emotions and decision-making. Touch, smell, taste, sound, and the look of a product - all play a vital role in our perceptions, attitudes and consumption of the product. Understanding the roles played by these offers a valuable lead in today's marketplace. Though the stimulation of the senses is of vital importance in today's marketing, the use of specific sense as a marketing technique has not been uniformly developed.

## Sensory Marketing as a Promotional Advantage

Sensory marketing can be used by firms as a promotional advantage for several reasons like: a) It endeavours to attract people, b) It creates brand preferences and stimulating the unconscious sense of the consumer, and c) It gives companies a cutting edge-something more than its competition.

## Business Implications of Sensory Marketing

The concept of multisensory marketing would become much vital to marketing in the coming years, and actually might grow to be a cost of admission into a few industries or product markets. The rising older generation considers a few small indulgences a significant part of their routine life; but this generation would require a more effective sensory stimuli. Countries like Japan, India, and Thailand have a longstanding rich culture and traditions of integrating the five senses. In future, more US firms will loan for flavours and look for globally appealing sensory cues. At the same time, global companies will focus on local taste and preferences using their multisensory to fit the countries. Some will find this a deterrent to applying multisensory marketing in all but the most affluent markets.

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