

Chapter 14

The Use of Sensorial Marketing in Stores: Attracting Clients through their Senses

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ABSTRACT

The main concern of this chapter is to develop a state-of-the-art of the literature referring to the use of sensorial marketing within the store. For this purpose, a deep interdisciplinary review of the theoretical and empirical works related to this discipline has been carried out. Thanks to this review, the link between some sensorial stimuli and consumer behavior has been demonstrated, but also the lack of research in some areas of study has been identified. This chapter provides a general overview of the sensorial variables used within the store by the managers, their main effects in the consumer behavior, and the most important model, the SOR model, to explain these relations. Conclusions, managerial implication, and recommendations for future research are provided.

INTRODUCTION

In the last decades, the classic tools used by managers to encourage sales and change customers' attitudes or behaviors within the store were the so-called 4p's: product, price, promotion and placement. Managers are much more concerned now about other type of variables related to the retail environment and atmosphere.

As early as the beginning of the last century, when big schemes based on self-service system such as supermarkets and hypermarkets appeared on the scene, store managers became aware of the importance of variables such as the image. They start to feel the need of having a perfect arrangement of the products in the point-of-sale, giving rise to a new concept in marketing: merchandising. Merchandising is understood as a group of

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techniques that promote the sales of goods in retail, helping customers in their purchasing process thanks to a good presentation of their products, its environment and the use of the space in a profitable way (Zorrilla, 2000).

However, taking into consideration the high level of competition in the retail market due to the arrival of new shops, the *online shopping* and also the evolution of the consumer behaviors, managers had to find new formulas apart from the merchandising techniques to differentiate themselves. These new formulas refer to the creation of different ambiances and experiences for the customers within the store.

As Wright, Newman, and Dennis (2006) said, “for decades, marketers and researchers have been aware that shopping is not just a matter of obtaining tangible products, but also about experience and enjoyment.” The result of this was the birth of a new discipline in marketing: sensorial marketing. The sensorial marketing is defined as the utilization of stimuli and elements which customers perceive by means of the senses, this is, sight, hearing, touch, smell and taste, to create specific ambiances (Gómez & García, 2010).

What seems clear right now is that customers feel the need of making the most of their time. They prefer to spend their free-time with leisure activities in which the hedonic component is high, what perfectly fits with the creation of experiences and atmospheres within the store using the sensorial marketing.

In this chapter, a review of the main literature related to sensorial marketing will be provided. For that purpose, an interdisciplinary approach by means of the analysis of empirical/experimental papers from different disciplines such as marketing, psychology and other behavioral sciences, has been carried out.

As a result, the main sensorial variables and the effect of its manipulation in consumer behaviors will be explained. Gaps in the literature and future areas of research will be also identified.

BACKGROUND

Sensorial marketing, as explained above, refers to the manipulation of some elements by retailers which are related to human senses, in order to create specific atmospheres. This promotes the development of key performance indicators, such as the duration of visit or the money spent in the store.

Although the use of the physical setting to create atmospheric impact as a form of marketing communications can be traced as far back as 1908 when the American Telegraph and Telephone (AT&T) Company used the visual impact of its organization’s building’ (Wright, Newman, & Dennis, 2006) as a tool. So it was in the beginning of the nineties when the potential of the atmospheric effects in retail become evident.

In relation with the origin of the atmosphere concept, it goes back to the creation of the environmental psychology. According with the psychology science, “psychologists have determined that the physical environment has an effect on human behavior and this branch of psychology has become known as environmental psychology” (Countryman & Jang, 2006). Also Mehrabian and Russell (1974) described it as “the direct impact of physical stimuli on human emotions and the effect on physical stimuli on a variety of behaviors, such as work performance or social interaction.”

Taking into consideration this premise, Kotler (1973) stated that if the physical environment had an effect on human behavior, it would also influence the behavior or individuals in consumer settings such as retail stores (Countryman & Jang, 2006), giving rise to the atmosphere’s concept. He defined it as “the intentional control of ambient variables with the purpose of getting a concrete customer’s response” (Turley & Milliman, 2000).

Since then, various academic works have been published relating to this area. From the theoretical point of view, there are several typologies of ambient variables. In our opinion, Baker (1986), Bitner (1992) and Turley and Milliman (2000)

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