

Multi-Sensory Brand Experience and Impulse Buying Tendency: An Exploration of Sri Lankan Supermarkets

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How to cite this paper: B. T. K. Chathuranga | V. G. P. Lakshika "Multi-Sensory Brand Experience and Impulse Buying Tendency: An Exploration of Sri Lankan Supermarkets" Published in International

Journal of Trend in Scientific Research and Development (ijtsrd), ISSN: 2456-6470, Volume-3 | Issue-5, August 2019, pp.2497-2501,

<https://doi.org/10.31142/ijtsrd27846>



IJTSRD27846

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I. INTRODUCTION

The concept of 'Supermarket' has been originated in between 1920s to 1930s. Further, it has become to a dominant situation in late 1950s. Before the concept of 'Supermarket' the name of 'chain stores' had been used which started in late 1870s (Reardon and Gulati, 2008). Though in the early days customers more focused on product functioning or attributes, at present day's customers are more concerning the added benefits given to them and one of those is the store experience which cannot be neglected (Turley and Milliman, 2000). In addition to that, brands that are more responsive to the consumers' changes have been able to survive from the cluttered marketing environment in the present (Fournier, 1998). In the current technologically sound era with more informed customers with higher expectations, it has become imperative to shift attention from the features and benefits based approach where experiences are capitalized. The constantly growing competition in the market requires companies to come up with new methods to differentiate from others (Wanivenhaus, 2015). Based on this context companies have the opportunity to stage differentiated experiences using sensory stimulations which make their offerings more unique and memorable. Added to this the senses play significant roles in consumer experience and emotions tied to it. In retail design brands related to sensory experience attract customers and stimulate strong, positive, and distinctive impression across all five senses.

ABSTRACT

It is important to understand sensory stimulation of people in human environments in designing supermarket. Human senses play significant roles in human experience and the memories. In retail design brands related to sensory experience attract customers and stimulate strong, positive, and distinctive impression across all five senses. In this study multiple sensory cues are found in relation to sight, sound, scent and touch. The main objectives of executing this research are to investigate the impact of multi-sensory brand experience attributes; sight, sound, scent and touch on impulse buying tendency of Sri Lankan Supermarket consumers and to identify the most influential sensory attribute that impacts impulse buying tendency.

A quantitative study carried out under this research using a survey method and convenient sampling techniques was used. The researcher used regression analysis technique in order to test the hypothesis and identifying the impact multi-sensory branding experience on impulse buying tendency, addressing the significance of each independent variable.

According to the findings of the study it was revealed, there is no significant influence of sound and touch on impulse buying tendency whereas there is a significant impact of sight and scent on impulse buying tendency. Further, findings revealed that Sight is one of the most important sensory channels in comparison to other sensory receptors such as sound, smell, touch, and taste on impulse buying tendency of Sri Lankan supermarket consumers.

KEYWORDS: *Experiential marketing, Impulse buying tendency, multi-sensory branding, supermarket*

ISSN: 2456-6470

Therefore marketers need to provide an enjoyable shopping experiences and to reach the minds and heart of the customers, and this shopping experience can lead to the impulsive buying behaviour of the consumers (Unsalan, 2016). The term impulsive buying is generally considered to be synonymous with "unplanned buying" which describes any purchases made by the customer without previously planned in advance (Stern, 1962). While there are number of factors affected on the impulsive buying of the consumers, in this study has been focused on multi-sensory brand experience on the impulsive buying decision of the customers of Sri Lankan supermarket. The connection that could exist between multi-sensory brand experience and impulse buying tendency of customers in particular, rarely has been researched by scholars before. Hence, researcher intends to build a unique conceptual argument to empirically test its relevance and add novel knowledge in an area where existing literature is minimal.

Further Ghani and Jan (2011) have mentioned that factors such as the shopping environment, product display, shelf location and space and mood are the element of multi-sensory brand experience that can effect on the impulsive buying behaviour and influences of these factors need to be examined on the future researches.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

"In branding literature, the concept of brand identity is defined as a unique set of brand associations that a firm can create or maintain" (Aaker, 2014). In other words, it is the impression or the unique space the brand intends to occupy in the consumer's mind. It may involve a value-proposition with functional, emotional or self-expressive benefits. The emotional linkage between a brand and a consumer is important in building strong brands. Researchers also confirms that consumers look for and buy emotional experiences around what has been bought and no longer buys products and services alone (Brembeck and Ekstro, 2004). Hence, the modern marketing practitioners have realized the need to go beyond conventional methods of creating brand identity. With that arena sensory elements are increasingly becoming important when conceptualizing a revised corporate identity construct (Bartholmé and Melewar, 2011). Furthermore, it is essential to move attention from the features-and-benefits approach advocated by traditional marketing to given that customers with experiences. In contrast to its narrow focus on functional features and benefits in traditional marketing, experiential marketing focuses on customer experiences. Experiences occur as a result of encountering, undergoing or living through things. Experiences provide sensory, emotional, cognitive, behavioural, and relational values that replace functional values (Schmitt, 2014).

A. Sensory Branding

Sensory branding is based on the phenomenon that human beings most likely to form, retain and revisit memory when all five senses (taste, smell, sight, sound and touch) are engaged (Hussain, 2017). Sensory branding uses these human instincts as a strategy to sell their goods or services by creating such environment that appeals to senses at the point of sale.

B. Multi-Sensory Branding

"A multi-sensory brand-experience takes place when more than one of the five senses contributes to the perception of sensory experiences" (Hultén, 2011). The multi-sensory brand experience is defined as a brand-experience that supports individual value creation and refers to how individuals respond when a firm interacts, and supports their purchase and consumption processes through the involvement of the five senses in generating customer value, experiences, and brand as image (Hultén, 2011).

Building on Bitner's (1992) categorization of the three environmental dimensions of retail atmosphere which are; ambient conditions; space/ function; and signs, symbols and artefacts, and drawing on Kotler's (1973) categorization of store atmosphere (visual, aural, olfactory and tactile), Soars (2009) categorized retail atmosphere according to the four senses of sight, sounds, smell and touch.

C. Impulsive Buying Behaviour

Impulse buying behaviour is a sudden, persuasive, hedonically complex buying behaviour in which the rapidity of an impulse decision process precludes thoughtful and deliberate consideration of alternative information and choices (Park, Kim and Forney, 2011). Given the focus on experiential aspects of consumption, it seems vital that marketers understand impulse buying behaviour at supermarket from an experiential perspective. Further

sensory branding strategy aims to generate positive emotional state in the minds of the consumers and thereby influence impulse buying tendency.

Hence following research main questions and sub research questions were developed for the study:

1. Is there an impact of sight on impulse buying tendency in supermarket?
2. Is there an impact of sound on impulse buying tendency in supermarket?
3. Is there an impact of scent on impulse buying tendency in supermarket?
4. Is there an impact of touch on impulse buying tendency in supermarket?
5. What is the most influencing sensory branding element/elements that stimulate/stimulates impulse buying tendency in supermarket?

With the intention of coming with answers for the research questions developed under the study the following objectives were established.

1. To examine the impact of sight on impulse buying tendency in supermarket.
2. To examine the impact of sound on impulse buying tendency in supermarket.
3. To examine the impact of scent on impulse buying tendency in supermarket.
4. To examine the impact of touch on impulse buying tendency in supermarket.
5. To examine the most influencing sensory branding element/ elements that stimulates/stimulate impulse buying tendency.

D. Multi-sensory brand experience and Impulsive Buying Behaviour

It is evident that the types of senses that build a multi-sensory brand experience have been categorized as attributes of store atmosphere by well reputed researchers. Namely they are sight, sound, scent and touch. Taste is not given prominence by researcher in this context as it is less applicable pertaining to the multi-sensory experience created within Supermarket. Further it is emphasized that the stimulating positive sensorial emotional states and providing customer with a favourable shopping experiences within the store has a high possibility on resulting in impulse buying. There for it is rational to build following hypothesis.

Music is about complex set of expressive sound collection since it consists with some key elements like rhythm, pitch, melody and harmony. According to preview studies music not only stimulate impulse buying independently but also interact with other factors to affect impulsive buying behaviour (Demoulin, 2011). Background music coordinating with other factors, has such effects like reducing consumers' time perception of purchase and waiting (Gelinac-chebat and Filiatrault, 1993) affecting consumers' perception of the entire environment (Hui, Dube and Chebat, 1997) Increasing sales (Morrison et al., 2011) influencing consumers' impulsive buying tendency (Morrison et al., 2011) changing consumers' experiencing attitude (Morrison et al., 2011) and promoting consumers' interaction with the environment (Morrison et al., 2011). Considering about the above facts background music is able to influence consumers' perception and stimulate consumers' positive emotion, so that consumers can enjoy

the shopping experience and be more likely to have impulsive buying behaviour. Hence the first hypothesis aims to discover whether music has a significant impact on impulsive buying tendency

H1 : Music has a significant impact on impulsive buying tendency.

As well as music, the smell of the store can also directly influence on the emotions and moods of the consumers (Levy and Weitz, 2002). Further, the pleasant environment in the store makes customers to spend more time looking through merchandise, which will result in impulse buying. Moreover, how the store smell impacts on the impulse buying behaviour has been identified by Matilla and Wirtz (2008) and Mohan (2013) in their studies. Hence the next hypothesis of this study is that

H2 : Smell has a significant impact on impulsive buying tendency.

Retailers use window displays in the façade of the store to attract customers into the store and provide message about the products offered inside the store (Levy and Weitz, 2002). As cited in Levy and Weitz (2002), Cornelius (2010) mentions that well designed storefront window displays are regarded as useful technique to attract the attention of new customers and motivate them to visit the store. Further, Mehta (2014) suggested that there are positive relationships between window display and impulse buying and therefore, this research proposes the hypothesis as

H3 : Sight has a significant impact on impulsive buying tendency.

The sense of touch, also called tactile sense, allows humans to have physical contact with their surroundings (Hulten, 2011). The providing opportunity to touch products has been shown to have an influential impact on customers' attitudes and behaviour (Peck and Wiggins, 2006). Further, Peck and Wiggins (2006) mentioned that tactile encounters are likely to persuade people to make impulse purchases and even buy items they usually do not recognize. Therefore it is rational to suppose an optimistic impact of touch on impulse buying tendency

H4 : Touch has a significant impact on impulsive buying tendency

Further, to identify the most influencing sensory element on impulsive buying tendency following hypothesis was developed

H5 : Multi-sensorial elements have not equally influenced on impulsive buying tendency

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The considered research paradigm for the study is positivist where the researcher is concerned with gaining knowledge in a world which is objective using scientific methods of enquiry. Deductive approach adopted to the study where an extensive literature review was conducted to develop hypothesis. A quantitative study carried out under this research using a survey method within the premises of western province. The study was considered as single cross sectional design which uses one sample and carried under non-contrived settings. In this study population was identified as Supermarket consumers and convenient sampling used as a sampling techniques. "A sample size should be adequate enough that can serve our purpose. It should have efficiency, Flexibility and reliability" (Kothari, 2010). Hence Sample size set in 200 supermarket consumers. Data were analysed through both inferential and descriptive statistics. As an inferential statistical tool, the researcher used regression analysis technique in order to test the hypothesis and identifying the impact of multi-sensory branding experience on impulse buying tendency, addressing the significance of each independent variable.

Reliability were tested and computed Cronbach's Alpha measures are greater than the standard 0.7, except for the variable Touch. However, according to Malhotra and Dash (2010), if a dimension or variable has at least a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.6 it is sufficient for reliability. Hence, it could be concluded that the data collected for this study are highly reliable. As per results generated in KMO, Bartlett's test of sphericity, composite reliability, AVE evident that all criteria testing convergent validity has been satisfied. In other words, it is ensured that the items developed to measure a specific dimension/variable highly correlate with the specific dimension/variable. Reliability and Validity tests were satisfied according to their tests and standards. Hence, it is revealed that the data collected through the questionnaires are pure and valid.

IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

In order to test the developed hypothesis, Multiple Linear Regression is used. It is being used to infer the impact of independent variables on the dependent variable. It is a statistical technique that simultaneously develops a Mathematical relationship between two or more independent variables and inter-scaled variables. In this study a multiple linear regression is carried out to examine the impact of the four independent variables; sight, sound, scent and touch on the dependent variable; impulse buying tendency.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.487a	.237	.222	.33584	1.812

Table1. Model Summary

Model summary (Table 1) computed through regression analysis, the R square value is 0.237. R square value represents the total variation of the dependent variable; Impulse Buying Tendency that can be explained by the independent variables; sight, sound, scent and touch. In this study it could be interpreted as, 23.7% variance of impulse buying tendency could be explained by the sensory stimuli created through sight, sound, scent and touch.

The regression model is evaluated to identify the impact of independent variables on impulse buying tendency. According to the ANOVA table P value is less than 0.05 at 95% level of confidence interval. It indicates that the overall regression model that's been generated is statistically significant and is a good predictor of the dependent variable. In other words, the regression model is well fitted and predicts the dependent variable; impulse buying tendency significantly well.

Table2. ANOVA

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	2.938	4	.734	3.746	.006a
Residual	40.195	205	.196		
Total	43.133	209			

In hypothesis testing, analysed with the outcomes of the regression analysis. The regression model is evaluated to identify the impact of independent variables on impulse buying tendency, and to identify the most significant variable affecting impulse buying tendency. In order to do so, coefficients table is scrutinized.

When investigating the Sig. value of the independent variables of the model, it is evident that Sig. value of Sight and scent are less than 0.05 with a positive standardized coefficient of 0.208 and 0.089 respectively. However, the Sig. values of Music and Touch are greater than the alpha level 0.05.

Hence it could be concluded that, there is no significant impact of sound and touch on impulse buying tendency whereas there is a significant impact of sight and scent on impulse buying tendency.

Table3. Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
1	(Constant)	2.406	.286		8.423	.000
	MUSIC	0.037	.063	.053	0.598	.551
	TOUCH	0.046	.066	.057	0.692	.490
	SIGHT	0.208	.084	.221	2.461	.015
	SCENT	0.089	.042	.160	2.099	.037

V. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

As consumer decision making has shifted from the rational to the emotional and experiential, consumers subconsciously require engagement of five senses within the shopping environment to be induced to purchase (Kim et al., 2009). This study was carried out with main five objectives in mind. That is to examine sight, sound, touch and scent individually impacts impulse buying tendency and to identify the sensorial element that influences impulse buying tendency the most. According to the Data analysis, it was identified that sight and scent are the sensorial element that has a significant impact on impulse buying tendency; with regard to Supermarket consumers in Sri Lanka. Further sight is the most important and influential factor on impulse buying tendency with standardized coefficient of 0.221. Sound and Touch did not reveal to be having such impact on impulse buying tendency.

Hence, the empirical findings of this study agree with the fact that, "Sight is one of the most important sensory channels in comparison to other sensory receptors such as sound, smell, touch, and taste" (Krishna, 2007). Lindstrom (2005) mentioned that sight often over rules the other senses, and has the power to convince us against all rational. As per existing literature, shoppers are able to form images, associations, perceptions, and memories of their shopping experience through visual experience (Bagdare and Roy, 2016). Vieira (2010) found aesthetic design factors to influence consumer patronage, satisfaction, and money spent in a store. It was revealed in this research that sight has a significant impact on impulse buying tendency. Further Visual merchandising practices, serving as stimuli that incite a desire that eventually motivates a consumer to make an unplanned purchase decision upon entering the store, significantly influence consumers' impulse buying behaviours.

Further, conceptual literature about sensory branding speaks about certain industries which would be have a

richer impact of non-visual stimuli. "Floor (2006) stated that coffee shops, candle stores, perfumeries, bakeries, and lots of other stores are characterized by the smell of their products as part of their experience". Specific fragrances perform precise functions. Similarly this study revealed scent have a significant impact on impulse buying tendency.

However, as per the research findings, it was clearly revealed that even though multi-sensory brand experience (sight, sound, scent, touch) may be able to provoke other consumer behaviour patterns, through this study, it was revealed that, sight and scent are the only influential variable in inducing impulse buying tendency Supermarket consumers in Sri Lanka.

Therefore, supermarket store owners are suggested to involve sight related, visual tactics and scent related stimuli in order to stimulate impulse/unplanned purchases. Because according to the research finding, if visual experience and scent related stimuli were at its optimal level, it would motivate the customer to spend more time and buy more than what they had planned.

VI. LIMITATION AND RECOMMENDATION FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Main limitation of this study was effects of sensory branding strategies occur subconsciously through the sensory stimuli provided however, when gathering data for the research respondents were asked to fill in the questionnaire in a fully conscious state. Thus, there is a possibility of the respondent not being able to comprehend and capture his or her subconscious state of mind that existed within the staged sensory shopping environment at the point of purchase. Since this research involves psychological variables, direct human interaction would aid in deriving a deeper understanding of the phenomena and identifying overlooked factors of structured questions. Hence, it is suggested to research in qualitative approach as well as in quantitative approach for further research purposes.

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