THE STUDY OF IMPACT OF SENSORY BRANDING ON CONSUMERS WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO STARBUCKS & KFC.

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Abstract

The research focuses on importance of sensory branding on Food industry. Two highly reputed brands: KFC & Starbucks have been chosen and impact of sensory branding on their consumers has been studied. Marketers have always focused on auditory and visual stimulation of consumers. Finding a co-relation between sensory stimulation using all five senses and its impact on creating brand differentiation will help marketers establish a stronger and longer-lasting emotional connection with consumers.

This study aims to understand the impact of sensory branding on consumers of KFC & Starbucks. This has been studied by conducting surveys among regular consumers of the two brands to study what factors attract them towards the company. An analysis has been done on the impact of all five senses leading to brand differentiation.

Keyword: Sensory branding, Brand differentiation, Auditory & Visual Stimulation, consumer behavior

1.INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

The concept of branding is already undergoing dramatic changes. New technologies have allowed us to reach from mass production to mass customization of brands. A growing number of customers are turning to new methods of reaching customers that transcend the traditional tools of brand building. Marketers are trying to find new ways to build stronger connections to their customers & drive preference for their brand by employing scent, sound and material textures.

The world of branding that once focused on the Unique Selling Proposition (USP) is now focusing more on Holistic Selling Proposition (HSP). HSP brands are those which not only anchor themselves in tradition but also adopt characteristics of religious sensory experience to leverage the concept of sensory branding as a holistic way of spreading the news.

The idea that forms the basis of Sensory Branding is that consumers are most likely to form, retain and revisit their memory when their all five senses are engaged during the process of buying products or services. Marketers are going beyond the traditional means of sight & sound stimulation to all other senses to establish a stronger and longer-lasting emotional connection with consumers.

The food industry is unlikely to leave things as they are today. They persist in designing the smell of the product and the sound of the packaging, as well as controlling the sound your food makes when you eat it. They have begun tampering with the colour and the flavour, creating new levels of sensory preferences. The research focuses on importance of sensory branding on Food industry. Two highly reputed brands: KFC & Starbucks have been chosen and impact of sensory branding on their consumers has been studied.

Definition

Sensory Branding is an emerging business discipline that applies analytical techniques to amalgamate the use of sensory stimuli such as scent, sound and texture in order to develop strong brands that are more...
memorable for customers than conventional visual branding techniques alone.

The importance of the five senses in Sensory Marketing

Touching, tasting, hearing, smelling and seeing a product plays an important role in our understanding. Perception of these roles has a valuable advantage in the market today. These senses are image of our daily lives, and by using them we satisfy our needs and desires. Sensory stimulation plays a very important role in building relationship of consumer with the brand. Sensory stimulation not only attracts consumer choice but also helps distinguish a product from others.

- **Sight**: Colour produces different reactions in people and has certain mental impact on customers. Logos, colours, packaging, design and attractive shape can strengthen the desired image of your product in consumer’s mind. Sight stimuli may also have an emotional response besides drawing attention.

- **Smell**: The sense of smell is very close to our emotions and behaviour & it has great influence on our behaviour. Long-term effect of smell causes more fragrant memory and an aromatic object is much attractive than non-aromatic one.

- **Sound**: Sound is often used as an efficient tool for communicating with the unconscious need of the consumer. Sound can prove to have positive results in the consumer experience & the right kind of music can even affect the buying behaviour of the consumer.

- **Touch**: Eye alone is not enough to judge products. Visual & auditory sensory stimuli make customers closer to products and they wouldn’t mind touching it to further enhance their experience with the product. By touching the products, customer behaviour and shopping attitude is positively affected.

- **Taste**: In today’s competitive market, attaching a unique taste to your brand can help in creating a differentiation of service. Taste adds a unique value making it a memorable experience for the consumers that stimulates the replication and extension of their overall experience, regardless of the price.

### 1.2. Problem Statement

To investigate the impact of sensory branding on two major brands: KFC & Starbucks and to find out which two among the five senses are the most impactful to a consumer in today’s age of strong brand consciousness & competition.

### 1.3. Aim & Objectives

The main senses that were targeted traditionally were visual & auditory. There are new advertisements coming up, all giving digital sound effects and excellent quality picture. However, customers are being bombarded so much each day through advertising that to make him/her remember your brand you need to target remaining three senses also. The use of accurate and most relevant sensory information can prove to be a critical advantage for brands who are competing to survive every day.

This study aims to understand the impact of sensory branding on consumers of KFC & Starbucks. This will be studied by conducting surveys among regular consumers of the two brands to study what factors attract them towards the company. An analysis will then be done on the impact of all five senses leading to brand differentiation.

**Hypothesis & Assumptions:**

- Only stimulation through sight and smell (traditional methods of branding) is enough to trigger a consumer towards your brand/product.
- Stimulation of all five senses in important in affecting consumer behavior.

### 2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 2.1. Research Design

For the purpose of collecting data for the study, we adopted a survey research design and a cross sectional survey of people. These respondents took the survey either through an online or offline survey form. The respondents were students residing in and around
Viman Nagar, Pune, India and every respondent had visited the KFC store or Starbucks Coffee House at least thrice. While analysing, data was divided into five elements namely Sight, Smell, Taste, Sound & Touch. The research conducted was mainly qualitative & exploratory in nature and was conducted on survey monkey.

2.2. Data Collection

The data for this study was obtained from primary, case study & secondary sources and was analysed by measuring the existence of a relationship between two variables under study- Sensory Stimulation & Brand Differentiation. Hence, we adopted this tool to enable us to ascertain the extent of relationship between the sensory branding (predictor) and customer loyalty (criterion) variable.

Primary Data was collected through sample surveys via questionnaires conducted online. Here, only a part of the population was approached for the study. The sample selected were students within the age group of 18 and 25 years.

The Case Study method was used to provide context to the data attained about KFC & Starbucks, thus offering a more complete picture about sensory branding of the two brands under study.

Secondary Data was collected via research reports, the Internet and relevant reference books. Other sources were published texts, literature reviews & individual feedbacks on the internet.

3. DATA ANALYSIS

This provides the empirical findings that have been gathered during the research study. It discusses with the empirical studies and the theories which have been considered in relation to the research questions. This section focuses on consumer perception about the brand.

Out of the all respondents interviewed, 58% and 60% visit KFC and Starbucks respectively once in three months.

36% love KFC for its unique taste and 32% like it for its quick service. On the other hand, 48% of the respondents love Starbucks for its freshly brewed coffee quality while 36% like it for the overall experience it provides.
Sensory Stimulation within consumers using Likert Scale:

Out of the five senses, Touch, Sound and Sight have proved to be the most important. Majority of respondents consider touch as the most important out of the five senses. Sight and sound followed respectively. Apart from its coffee, Starbucks is known for the overall experience it provides to the consumers. It’s ‘Just-Say-Yes Policy’ has helped it differentiate itself from the rest. When asked to rank which of the five senses are most stimulated by the brand, most of the candidates’ ranked stimulation by touch number one, followed second by auditory stimulation and third by visual stimulation. This proves that consumers have moved ahead of the traditional means of sensory stimulation and have transformed themselves as more aware and well-informed consumers.

Analysis with respect to Consumer Behaviour:

The consumption patterns of the consumers were also dependent mainly on the sensory stimulation. The perfect sensory stimuli achieves the greatest impact on the buying behaviour of consumers. In case of Starbucks coffee, the smell of the freshly brewed coffee significantly impacts a consumer’s perception about its quality & environment. 54% of the respondents agreed that a strong aroma of coffee can stimulate their appetite further influencing them to enter the coffee shop at any time of the day.
A similar case was observed with respect to KFC. 50% of the respondents agreed that a good tempting smell of KFC's chicken can cause them to enter the food outlet and buy a meal even if they would not particularly be hungry. 36% of the respondents strongly agreed to this statement while 14% disagreed to it.

Consumers notice & recognize shapes and colours related to brands really fast. This is further enhanced by audio logo, brand theme, sound scape, brand voice or jingle. This is why sight and sound have traditionally been used for creating a sensory experience amongst the consumers. Importance of auditory and visual stimulation with respect to Starbucks and KFC were analyzed and the results obtained have been examined below.

Stimulating the sense of hearing can trigger positive emotions in the consumer. While 52% of the respondents agreed and 32% of our respondents strongly agreed that the kind of music played at Starbucks or a KFC outlet along with the noise generated by the crowd sitting there affects their decision at entering the place. Sound, thus can be used as an efficient tool for communicating with the unconscious needs of the consumer.

Visual stimulation of the consumers is widely dominant among the five senses and is considered the strongest sense used in marketing. This is rightly proven as 48% of the respondents strongly agreed that the store layout & design at Starbucks that includes the lighting, furniture and merchandise arrangement and the internal architecture at a KFC store was a critical factor in deciding whether to enter the store or not. The 48% were followed by 42% respondents who agreed to the statement.
32% of the respondents agreed that they acted at the spur of the moment when it came to satisfying their hunger pangs with a KFC Burger or a freshly brewed Starbucks coffee. However, 26% of the respondents disagreed to acting irrationally. This was followed by 24% respondents who strongly supported the statement.

Chi Square Test

The two parameters under comparison are:

- Visual & Auditory Stimulation (Sight & Sound)
- Brand differentiation caused due to sensory branding

\[ H_0: \text{Brand differentiation is not caused only due to Auditory & Visual Stimulation, rather through sensory stimulation that includes all five senses.} \]

\[ H_1: \text{Out of the five senses, brand differentiation is mainly caused due to Auditory & Visual Sensory Stimulation.} \]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree of Freedom</th>
<th>Degree of Significance</th>
<th>Critical Value</th>
<th>Chi Square Value</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>21.026</td>
<td>18.57</td>
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The degree of freedom was 12. Since the degree of significance was not mentioned, the researcher assumed it to be 5%. The critical value (CV) for which was 21.026. The chi square value was 18.57 which was lesser than the critical value. The detailed table with the calculations has been attached in Appendices. (Table 1.1)

Since Critical Value > Chi Square Value, Null Hypothesis has been accepted.

There is thus, no evidence that proves that sight and sound are the only 2 senses out of the 5 that lead to brand differentiation. The Null Hypothesis that brand differentiation is not caused only due to Auditory & Visual Stimulation, rather through sensory stimulation that includes all five senses was thus accepted.

This proves that there exists a strong relation between sensory stimulation of all 5 senses and not just sight and sound within the consumers of KFC & Starbucks.

**4. CONCLUSION**

Sensory branding focuses on both creating a bilateral interaction in real time and causing a sensory experience. Brands thus, look for a long-term relationship with their consumers aiming to position & trigger recall within the consumers at all times. In the current era, increased attention to the five human senses in the marketing process suggests that brands should be aware of the inner process of consumer in purchasing.
This is mainly due to the fact that today’s consumers don’t spend all their free time watching television or using traditional forms of media. Marketing activities that kindle all five senses and provide the most enjoyable experience are the ones that directly connect with consumers’ minds.

The research study conclusively provides evidence that brand differentiation is not caused due to Auditory & Visual Stimulation alone, rather through sensory stimulation that includes all five senses. Through this study, the researcher proved that touch has the highest correlation with consumer behaviour for KFC and Starbucks. This is followed by Sound & Sight, the traditional mean of sensory stimulation.

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