

Influence of Visuals on Consumer preference in Restaurants: Structure Equation Modelling Analysis

A. Neema^{1*}, I. Bapna²

^{1,2}Management department, MRSGI, DAVV, Indore, India

*Corresponding Author: neemaanushruti@yahoo.com

Available online at: www.ijcseonline.org

Abstract— Neuromarketing, as a scientific discipline in the field of marketing research, represents an implementation of neuroscientific methods, with a purpose of a better understanding of human behavior. This paper aimed at identifying the influence of visuals (what one see) on consumer preference in 3 star and above rating restaurants in Indore (Madhya Pradesh). The purpose of this study is to understand the current characteristic of visuals that is used in restaurants. It also seeks to understand the role of visuals to shape up consumer preference in restaurant industry. A sample of 100 consumers was taken who usually visited multi cuisine restaurants in Indore. Data was collected through a well-structured questionnaire and analyzed through SEM (structure equation modeling). This study will propose important implication for practitioners and academicians.

Keywords—Visuals, ConsumerPreference.

I. INTRODUCTION

The main question about the consumer preference is: why particular restaurant sells more than another one with the same products?

The answer is because of the experience that the restaurant can offer to customers. The consumers are always willing to pay to live a delightful experience.

The effect of atmospherics, or physical design and decor elements i.e. visual elements, on consumers is recognized by managers and mentioned in virtually all marketing, retailing, and organizational behavior texts. Managers continually plan, build, change, and control an organization's sensory elements, but frequently the impact of a specific sense on ultimate users of the facility is not fully understood.

Many managers realize that their businesses must deliver goods and services that really do meet with the rising expectations of their consumers. Ultimately this will be achieved only when organizations develop a better understanding of consumer needs and motivation (Cronje 2007).

“One of the most significant features of the total product is the place where it is bought or consumed. In some cases, the place, more specifically the atmosphere of the place, is more influential as the product itself in the purchase decision. In some cases, the atmosphere is the primary product.” (Kotler, 1973)

The causal chain connects atmosphere and purchase probability model. Atmospherics refers to the effort to design environments to stimulate purchases. The main dimensions consist of four parts. They are visual, aural, olfactory and tactile dimensions of atmosphere. The visual dimension includes color, brightness, size and shapes. The aural dimension includes volume and pitch. The olfactory dimension includes scent and freshness. The tactile dimension includes softness, smoothness and temperature. This model suggests that the sensory qualities of a purchase object are subjective and affect the buyer's perception of the quality of physical space. It was also suggested that architecture, interior design and window dressing play an important role in the customers' atmospheric realization (Kotler, 1973).

Visual /Sight stimulus may be color, light, form, space, variety of designs and ads. The physical environment such as lighting, color, style of furnishings, layout, and wall décor could be restricted by the organization to increase customers' affective behavior (Bitner, 1992). 83% of the information people retain has been taken in visually. So, more the brand is consistent in leveraging the sense of sight, more the brand consistently stands.

Eye is the most important component of sight. Each eye creates a 2 dimensional image of visible objects, turns it into visual image then brain changes this image and enables us to see 3D image of objects, this sensation is called sight (Batema, 2011). This is the sense one use most frequently. In

fact, one uses it all day every day, every second that one awakes. Sight is the most relied upon and important sense for most humans and often drives a first impression. For this reason, creative directors have long worked to create images, messages, and calls to action that are appealing and easily understood. (Lefebvre, 2010). Consistency of the brand is showed up in the colors and graphics that represent brand through the website, the décor in the office or retail outlet; the marketing materials, signage, the packaging of the products and how services are presented. A great example of a brand that has leveraged sight is Apple with the distinctive stylish design of their computers. Not to mention the sleek design of the iPod, down to the unique smooth look and feel of their earphones. Apple has fully integrated a distinctive visual design into all their products. They've been doing it for years.

Vision is the most powerful of the five senses. Understandably, it is the sense on which brand builders have traditionally concentrated. But the reality of our modern world is that visual messages and noise bombard us all day long. Visual clutter makes it hard to attract consumers by sight alone. Nevertheless, shape and colour can become indelibly wed to a brand under the right circumstances, from Hershey's kisses to the Hennessy XO cognac bottle. Just think of the impact the Hummer shape has had on car design. Even so, our world of visual overload demands a richer sensual experience.

II. RELATED WORK

The most significant senses that influence the buying decisions are 'Visuals' and 'Smell'. The researcher concluded that it has become imperative to address multiple senses of customers. It can be further concluded that with reference to application of multi-sensorial effect by restaurants, visuals and smell make a greater impact on customer experience inside the restaurant (Azeem, 2000). Multi-sensorial marketing enables the companies to develop a more impactful and differentiating shopping experience by fully leveraging on all the 5 senses. These senses of human play key and complicated role for discrimination to select a brand. Meanwhile, advertisement and business relationship exclusively concentrate on what we observe and hear and is not interested to apply another 3 senses. The topic of sensory branding is a recently established discussion at commercial management that by applying 5 senses of human, attempts to create powerful sensory relationship between brand and consumers to improve status of brand in today's competitive world full of different advertisements and by using sensory branding, to prevent from imitation of rivals (Lindstrom, 2005).

Despite challenging times ahead, the trend in the hospitality industry keeps on changing from time to time. This leads to the needs of managing the customer and making sure that all their needs and preferences could be fulfilled. Various marketing strategies had been applied in the industry to attract and retain the customers, inclusive the concept of sensory marketing. Sensory marketing is seen as an effective tool that can maximize product profitability. It has been used in the hospitality industry but not well-known in by the name of sensory marketing. Nevertheless, it is well known among the hotelier and foodservice industry especially those people in the area of design and layout, decoration, food presentation, music and even ambience (Sulaiman et.al, 2012).

The influence of the physical environment on emotions and behaviour has gained attention from architects and environmental psychologists (Donovan et.al, 1994). To capture the theme of experiential value, the hotel industry pursued experiential marketing management in order to manage the customer's entire experience of a product/service and a brand (Schmitt, 1999; 2003; Xu et.al, 2010). During the past several decades, physical environment has become an important area in the study of the retail environment, with researchers beginning to study the influence of the store environment on consumer behaviour (Turley et.al., 2000). The usage of atmospherics are related to the using of senses by the store in terms of lighting, colour, signage, textures, quality of materials, style of furnishings, layout, wall decor and temperature. According to the atmospherics could be considered as an emotionally oriented design of space which can affect both of its customers and employees (Skandrani et al., 2011).

Much research regarding the impact of environmental factors on customer emotion and behaviour has been done on retail shops, restaurants, games, and other service organizations, while limited research has been done on the spa industry. This study employed the scales from previous research that was conducted in retail, advertising, and restaurant. It is strongly recommended to explore and develop scales of sensory components and emotions in the spa industry. This research indicates that touch components such as smoothness, softness, comfortable temperature, and humidity are the most important sensory stimulation to please customers in spas. Sight components such as a comfortable and well organized layout; cleanliness; stylish design; and warm colour were proved to be important factors to please spa goers. Since those sight and touch sensory factors showed insignificant relationship with customers' behavioural intentions, pleasure is regarded as a full mediator of sight and touch with customers' behavioural intentions. This research suggests a multi-sensory phenomenon. While sight, sound, and touch sensory show relationship to

endogenous variables, each sensory factor is highly correlated exogenously (Kang et.al, 2010).

Design factors include exterior features, restaurant layout and furnishings and materials. Various external factors such as social and physical surroundings, including the presence of other people and sound, temperature, smell, color, time, and distraction affect food intake and food choice (Stroebele et.al, 2004).

III.METHODOLOGY

Objectives:

- To study the influence of visuals on consumer preference in restaurants.

Research methodology:

The various aspects of research design and methodology viz. nature and scope of the study, hypothesis formulated, data collection forms, sample design, statistical tools used etc are as under:-

Nature and Scope of the Study

The present study is exploratory in nature. It was focused to examine how visuals can influence consumer preference in any restaurant. This study is based on data gathered from people who goes for dining out to restaurants. The research work will provide useful insights to restaurant ie hospital industry to explore the factors that affects customer's preferences.

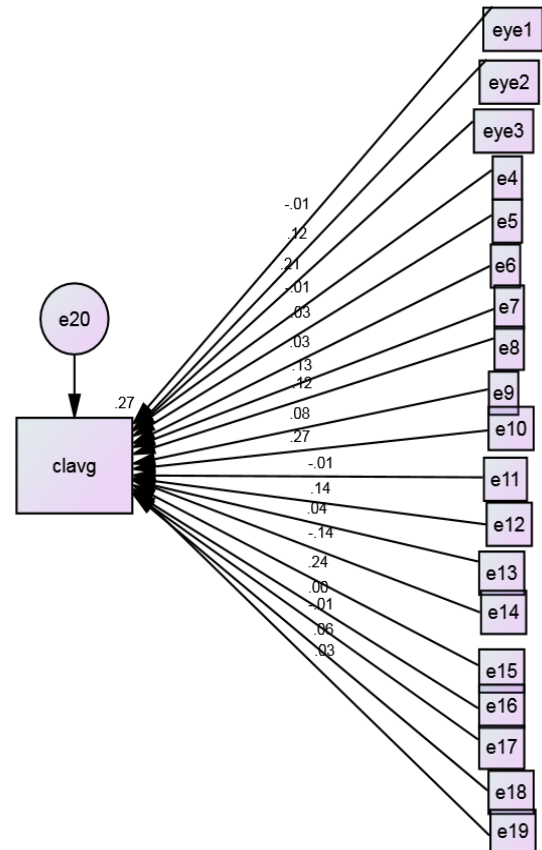
Collection of Data

Both primary and secondary sources, relevant for gathering requisite information pertaining to the research problem in hand, have been used in the study. First hand information has been collected through well structure questionnaire distributed to restaurant consumers. Responses were recorded using five-point likert scale with choice options of strongly disagree=1 to strongly agree=5. The secondary data have been gathered from books and journals. Sample size was of 100 respondents, both male and female consumers with different occupations ie business class, service class and professionals, with different educational background and age groups.

Statistical tool

Structured equation model was prepared to study the influence of various factors of visuals inside restaurants. Amos was used for SEM.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION



As it is evitable from the model that the highest influencing factor of visuals in contributing positive consumer preference are E3 (0.21), E10 (0.27), E15 (0.24). It means layout of the restaurant, food presentation and interior decoration plays very important role in shaping positive consumer preference. Among 19 visual factors, these three items have highest standardized estimate regression load.

V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results have shown prominent influence of visuals in building positive consumer preference for any restaurant. The findings are in support of many studies conducted earlier. Restaurant design is a complicated process that involves many factors. These factors greatly influence the dining experience and understanding them are keys to successful restaurant design. Environments can be evaluated in terms of ambient, social, and design factors (Baker, 1987). Another study concluded that the most significant senses that influence the buying decisions are 'Visuals' and 'Smell'. The researcher concluded that it has become imperative to address multiple senses of customers (Azeem, 2000).

VI. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE SCOPE

The results resembles with the finding of another study. The ability of the sensory environment to influence behavior and to create an image is particularly pertinent in the hospitality industry (hotels and restaurants). In recent years, however, an increasing number of “atmosphere” restaurants have opened (Kotler, 1973). Some restaurateurs argue that atmosphere can be the major determinant in making a successful restaurant. Customers may seek a dining experience totally different from home, and the atmosphere may do more to attract them than the food itself. As the restaurant industry has grown and more consumers increasingly expect a more entertaining atmosphere to enhance the dining experience, restaurateurs are making the effort to meet that desire with innovative and exciting designs. Innovative restaurant design makes dining out more exciting for customers. (Ryu, 2007).

Hence, it can be concluded from the research study that visuals plays a very important role in shaping consumer’s preference. The major factors are layout , interior and food presentation appeals highly to consumers. Restaurant industry should focus on above mentioned areas to increase their sales as well as it also leads to increased customer satisfaction and thus results in positive word of mouth.

Limitations:

1. The study is confined to Indore region only.
2. Sample size can be increased to get more accuracy.
3. The study is restricted to 3 star and above rating restaurants only, hence results cannot be generalized to whole hospital industry.

REFERENCES

- [1]. Azeem, M.A., Venkat R.T. (2000). Influence of Senses on In-store Customer Experience: A Study on Multi-Sensorial Marketing in Coffee Bars at Hyderabad. *Journal of Marketing Trends*, 1(2), 44-54.
- [2]. Baker, J. (1987). The Role of the Environment in Marketing Services: The Consumer Perspective. *The Services Challenge, Integrating for Competitive Advantage*, 79-84.
- [3]. Bitner, M.J. (1992). Servicescapes: The impact of physical surroundings on customers and employees. *Journal of Marketing*, 56, 57-71.
- [4]. Batema, C., (2011). Five senses theme idea. www.ehow.com/info-8074071-five-senses-theme-idea.html.
- [5]. Cronje, J.J. (2007). Assessing the Relative Efficiency Management of South African Banks. *Management Dynamics Journal*, 16(4), 11-23.
- [6]. Donovan, R.J., Rossiter, J.R., and Nesdale, A. (1994). Store atmosphere and purchasing behavior. *Journal of Retailing*, 70(3), 283-294.
- [7]. Kotler, P. (1973). Buying is marketing too! *Journal of Marketing*, 37(1), 54-67.
- [8]. Kotler, P. (1973). Atmospherics as a marketing tool. *Journal of Retailing*, 49(4), 48-64.
- [9]. Kang, E., Boger, C., Back, J. and Madera, J. (2010). The Impact of Sensory Environments on Spagoers’ Emotion and Behavioral

Intention. Conrad N. Hilton College of Hotel and Restaurant Management University of Houston, Houston, TX

- [10]. Lefebvre, D., (2010). Multi sensory branding improves customer retention”. Executive Vice President of Marketing, Specialty Print Communications. *Printing industries of America: the magazine*.
- [11]. Lindstrom, M. (2005). *BRAND sense Build Powerful Brands through Touch, Taste, Smell, Sight, and Sound*. New York: Free P.
- [12]. Ryu, K., and Jang, S.C. (2007). The effect of environmental perceptions on behavioural intentions through emotions: The case of upscale restaurants. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Research*, 31(1), 56-72.
- [13]. Schmitt, B.H. (1999). *Experiential marketing: how to get customers to sense, feel, think, act, and relate to your company and brands*. New York, N.Y.: Free Press.
- [14]. Schmitt, B.H. and Rogers, D.L.M (2008) (eds.) *Handbook on Brand and Experience Management*. Cheltenham, UK and Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar.
- [15]. Skandrani, H., Mouelhi, N.B.D. and Malek, F., (2011). Effect of store atmospherics on employees’ reactions. *International Journal of Retail and Distribution Management*, 39(1), 51-67.
- [16]. Stroebele, N., and De Castro, J.M. (2004). Effect of Ambience on Food Intake and Food Choice. *Nutrition*, 20, 821-838.
- [17]. Sulaiman, S., Haron, M., Chik, C. and Sumarjan, N. (2012). Consumer’s perception on hotel’s website from sensory marketing perspectives. 3rd international conference on business and economic research (3rd icber 2012) proceeding 12-13 march 2012. golden flower hotel, bandung, indonesia isbn: 978-967-5705-05-2. WEBSITE: www.internationalconference.com.my
- [18]. Turley, L.W. and Milliman, R.E. (2000). Atmospheric effects on shopping behavior: a review of the experimental evidence. *Journal of Business Research*, 49(2), 193-211.
- [19]. Xu, J.B., and Chan, A., (2010). A conceptual framework of hotel experience and customer based brand equity. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 22(2), 174-193.

Author’s profile

Dr Anushruti Neema pursued B.sc (computer science) from devi ahilya viswavidyalaya, Indore in 2004 and MBA (APR) in 2006. She got Ph.D degree in 2016. She is currently working as an Assistant Professor in management department of MRSGL, Indore since 2007. She has more than 11 research publications in international and national journals. Her major research work is done on sensory marketing and got two best paper awards in international conferences. She has 11 years of teaching experience and 9 years of research experience.

Dr. Ira Bapna pursued B.com, M.com from Vikram University, Ujjain. She is an Mba and Ph.D too. She is currently holding the Director’s post at MRSGL, Indore. She has more than 18 years of teaching and research experience. She has 40 plus research publications in international and national journals.