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The role of sensory marketing in supporting the brand: A study of customer' perceptions in chocolate qasr store in Mosul

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Abstract

This research paper explores how sensory marketing can support a brand's marketing efforts in a chocolate store located in Mosul. The study collected data from 60 customers and regular visitors of the store using a questionnaire, which was then analyzed using SPSS. The results indicated a strong and significant correlation between the five dimensions of sensory marketing and the brand variable in its two dimensions. Additionally, the study found that sensory marketing has a significant impact on the brand variable. The paper suggests using questionnaires to gather customer feedback and suggestions to improve the store's performance and enhance their overall experience.

Keywords: Branding, olfactory marketing, sensory marketing, tactile marketing, taste marketing, visual marketing

Introduction

The article explores the origins of symbols, which were initially used by early humans to convey messages before the invention of writing. Over time, symbols were utilized to distinguish between different societal hierarchies, such as ruling classes, kings, and princes. Eventually, symbols became an integral part of branding for restaurants, bars, hotels, factories, and other products to differentiate themselves from their competitors. As production and consumption increased, and product differentiation became more prevalent, the significance of branding grew substantially. However, many organizations find it challenging to effectively communicate their brand identity to consumers due to a lack of sensory and emotional appeal. This is where sensory marketing plays a critical role in marketing management. Sensory marketing is a specialized field that concentrates on understanding how customers' emotions, decisions, and perceptions are influenced by different sensory experiences.

Each sense - touch, smell, taste, sound, and sight - plays a vital role in shaping the customer's perception and encouraging them to make a purchase. This article aims to study the role of sensory marketing in supporting brand identity.

Research problem

The success of an organization depends on its ability to understand and meet the needs and desires of its customers, which allows it to outperform its competitors. In today's market, marketing is no longer limited to just production and sales. Therefore, supporting a customer's brand identity has become a critical challenge for businesses. As a result, we can ask the following question:

How can sensory marketing support the customer's brand identity in Mosul chocolate store?

Research significance

The research's importance is demonstrated by the following

1. The research will address a sensitive issue, which is supporting the customer's brand identity that cannot be defined without stimulating the five senses of customers and increasing their connection to it;
2. Diagnosing the reality of the role of sensory marketing in supporting brand identity will contribute to identifying strengths and weaknesses among customers;

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3. Demonstrating the role of the five senses in marketing and considering them when developing marketing plans to attract customers and making appropriate decisions related to market research.

Research objectives

The research aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. Building knowledge frameworks about sensory

marketing and brand identity;

2. Revealing the role that sensory marketing dimensions can play in supporting brand identity;
3. Identifying the level of customers' loyalty towards brand identity.

Hypothetical framework

Figure 1 shows the hypothetical research plan for this study

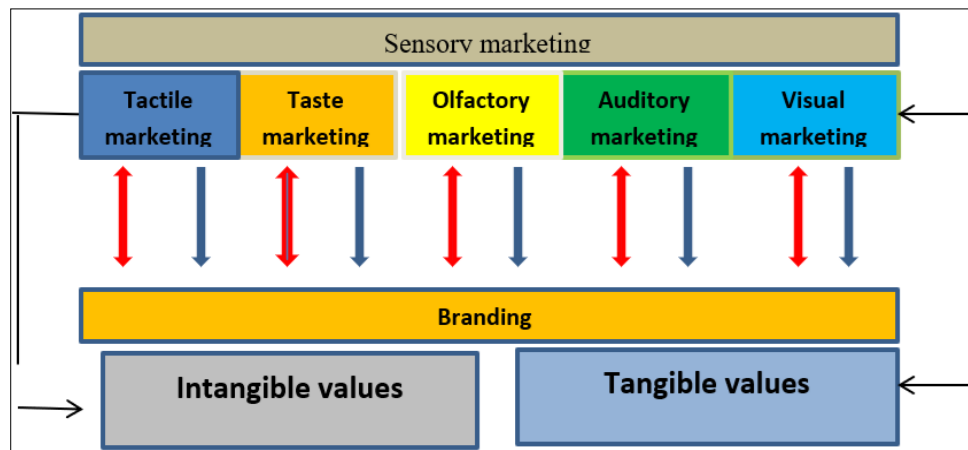


Fig 1: Hypothetical research plan

Research hypotheses

Main hypothesis 1: There is no significant correlation between sensory marketing and brand identity in Mosul chocolate store. From this hypothesis, the following sub-hypothesis emerges:

- There is no significant correlation between each dimension of sensory marketing individually and the dimensions of brand identity collectively.

Main hypothesis 2: There is no significant impact of sensory marketing on brand identity in Mosul chocolate store. From this hypothesis, the following sub-hypothesis emerges:

- There is no significant impact of each dimension of sensory marketing individually on the dimensions of brand identity collectively.

Literature Review

Sensory marketing

According to the Oxford Dictionary definition, the concept of sensation refers to the different abilities perceived by humans, including hearing, sight, smell, taste, and touch, to various stimuli that arise from within or outside the human body (Stevenson, 2010:19) ^[28]. These senses play a significant role in perceiving and distinguishing things.

Marketing researchers have offered different definitions of sensory marketing, but they all share a common objective of providing customers with novel stimuli that have a positive impact on their purchasing behavior. The American Marketing Association has defined sensory marketing as the use of marketing strategies that appeal to human senses to evoke emotions and influence customers' buying decisions (Dhahad, 2019:16) ^[5]. (Yozukmaz & Topaloglu2016:3) ^[30] argued that sensory marketing adds customer experiences and emotions to the marketing process. It is not just a function, but rather emotion, knowledge, sensation, and behavior are all dimensions of these experiences. Likewise, (Krishna, 2011:205) ^[18] emphasized that sensory marketing engages

customers' senses and affects their perceptions, behavior, and judgments. Still, (Kuczamer-Kłopotowska, 2017:17) ^[19] stated that in sensory marketing all forms of influencing happened on customers' senses fully and providing them with specific experiences aim to ensure positive interactions with them. (Rajput & Dhillon, 2013:712) ^[26] confirmed that human senses are closely related to each other in a marketing and behavioral context from the customer's emotional perspective. This indicates that marketing faces a qualitative leap in the contemporary market environment.

The importance of sensory marketing

Sensory marketing has gained significance due to the limited effectiveness of traditional marketing in retaining and attracting customers. As a result, marketers are exploring new approaches to influence customers' perceptions and thought processes (Wala, 2019:19) ^[29]. Sensory marketing has become increasingly important, especially in the restaurant industry, which has seen significant growth and intense competition to win customer satisfaction. This has led to a focus on customers' feelings and emotions, and thus, on all stimuli that target customers' senses and influence their behavior (Gajewska, 2019:18) ^[7]. (Grzybowska, 2013:206) ^[10] emphasized the importance of sensory marketing as a container that includes five essential facts in the marketing process which are:

1. In order to gain a better understanding of customers and leverage the brand, it is essential to comprehend their values, beliefs, emotions, feelings, and cultural background.
2. The significance of persuasive strategies lies in their ability to establish a connection between the brand and customers, which can drive specific behaviors through emotional communication.
3. Customers are emotional beings, and as such, their purchasing decisions are primarily driven by emotions.

Sensory marketing objectives

The goals of sensory marketing are to consistently engage customers' various senses and create an environment that is conducive to purchasing. Organizations strive to achieve several objectives, which can be summarized to (Hinestroza & James, 2014:4) (Neema & Bapna, 2012:206) (Yaqoob, 2022:65)^[13, 23], as follows:

1. Establishing a unique brand identity that enables organizations to differentiate themselves from competitors, increase their visibility among customers, and associate a specific set of attributes with their brand,
2. Creating a pleasurable experience for customers by focusing on emotions and feelings rather than just the functional features of products. This approach can enhance customer satisfaction and loyalty,
3. Boosting sales by influencing customers' behavior through an enjoyable sensory purchasing experience that encourages them to buy more products without even realizing it, leading to an increase in sales.

Dimensions of sensory marketing

Researchers do not much differ on the dimensions of sensory marketing because it is simply based the five senses. However, studies have focused on some senses more than others, as follows:

1. **Visual marketing:** Researchers have pointed out that the sense of sight is one of the most powerful senses that influence customer behavior. Elements related to this sense, such as calm colors associated with nature and bright lighting, can affect behavior by creating a suitable place for commercial activities (Guzel & Dortyol, 2016:4)^[13]. The sense of sight is used as an effective marketing and advertising tool through attractive logos, colorful posters, and elegant covers. With the development of electronic media, many hotels and tourism companies offer virtual tours through their websites by taking panoramic photos that allow viewers to see from all directions (Pawaskar & Gooelb, 2014:19)^[24].
2. **Auditory marketing** is the second most crucial tool for marketing communication with customers, as it involves the use of music and other sounds to evoke emotions. If used effectively, it can penetrate customers' consciousness and influence their behavior. Therefore, the selection of music and sounds should be carefully considered as they are among the most critical ways to attract customers (Kuczamer-Kłopotowska, 2017:19)^[19]. According to (Latasha, 2016:3)^[20], auditory marketing strategies have a positive impact on customers' responses and moods, making it a valuable way to connect with them. (Sendra-Nadal & Carbonell-Barrachina, 2017:16)^[27] have emphasized that sounds interact with the human brain, particularly in the emotional part, and can be used to communicate and influence customers' unconscious desires.
3. **Olfactory marketing:** The sense of smell is one of the most important human senses, particularly in the food industry, as it plays a significant role in attracting customers. According to (Latasha, 2016:3)^[20], olfactory memory is crucial in distinguishing different smells, and it develops over a person's lifetime by recording information related to smells in the brain. This memory is responsible for identifying smells based on past experiences. (Hassan, 2016:20)^[12] has emphasized that

the effective use of taste stimulants can provide a competitive advantage in the food industry and encourage customers to revisit restaurants. Similarly, (Bishop, 2017:13)^[3] has highlighted the importance of using scents to improve customer satisfaction and mood regulation, which can enhance certain products or brands. This is because scents can positively stimulate customers to spend more.

4. **Taste marketing:** The sense of taste is one of the most distinctive senses due to its ability to facilitate social exchanges and internal communication between the senses, and the interaction between customers to a high degree, leading to longer customer stays in the store as a result of the tasting experience, which leads to increased consumption of products (Depestele & Videmann, 2015:25)^[3]. Furthermore, (Elangovan & Padma, 2017:33)^[6] emphasized that the sense of taste is a combination of all senses that affect taste perception. Most restaurants use a multi-sensory approach to enhance taste perception. Most delicious dishes are designed not only for taste but also for a good aroma and visual appeal.
5. **Tactile marketing:** The sense of touch is the first sense to appear and develop, and it provides us with the most important means of communication with the outside world. The skin and the receptors in it are one of the largest and oldest sensory devices we have (Gallace & Spence, 2010:246)^[8]. This sense is used to create interest and entice customers to interact with products, and it is a way for marketers to get closer to customers (Abazi & Sohani, 2016:46)^[1]. A study by (Ifeanyichukwu, 2018:208)^[14] indicated that tactile marketing is related to the sense of touch, which is a way used to control customers' unconsciousness and influence their tastes and perceptions to form emotional links between products and customers.

Branding

To begin exploring branding, it is crucial to grasp the meaning of a brand. A brand serves as a vital connection between an organization and its customers, acting as a fundamental element of a product. It establishes a clear association between products bearing a specific brand and differentiates them from similar products with distinct brands. Moreover, maintaining quality craftsmanship is imperative for retaining customers and ensuring competitiveness in the market.

According to (Philip & Autre, 2012:314)^[25], a brand is defined as a name, symbol, phrase, design, or combination of these elements used to identify a product or service offering by a seller or group of sellers and distinguish them from competitors. (Kotler & Keller, 2016:442)^[17] suggest that branding enhances an individual's ability to remember or recognize a brand in all its details in order to make a purchase. A brand is any sign or signal used by a merchant, manufacturer, or service provider to differentiate their industry or services from those of others (Al-Alaq, 2002:3)^[2]. In this context, (Kaufmann *et al.*, 2016:520)^[16] emphasizes the degree of emotional ambition that represents customer satisfaction with a specific brand name. Customers are capable of forming emotional attachments with a brand in a way similar to personal relationships, and emotions towards the brand play a key role, particularly in the tendency to continue the relationship.

The importance of branding to the customer

(Grenler & Brown, 1996:6)(Al-Dewachi, 2022:208) ^[9] can be categorized the importance of branding to customer into three categories: behavioral, emotional, and cognitive. Behavioral refers to the customer's actual purchasing pattern, emotional refers to the customer's feeling of attraction towards the people working in the company, its products, or services, while cognitive is likely the most suitable for complex services. It measures the importance of cognitive planning in decision making and customer behavior in advance.

The components of branding

Branding cannot be limited to its name only, as the name is one of its essential elements and falls within its intangible elements. It also consists of other tangible elements, according to (Lewi *et al.*, 2007:24) ^[21] and (Maaraoui & Sahi, 2013:4) ^[22], (Mohammed, 2024:147)(Omar, 2022:47) as shown below:

Firstly, Tangible values are used by customers to compare different brands and are usually measured through the products or services offered by each brand. This helps customers determine the strength of a brand during the purchasing process. One of the key components of tangible values is objective quality:

Objective quality encompasses the tangible elements of the brand that facilitate the marketing of products. It represents the importance of the product or service in satisfying current and potential needs. The brand continuously responds to satisfy its customers, and each element of tangible values that contribute to objective quality can be explained as follows:

- **Product quality:** The quality of the product is measured through basic criteria such as the quality of materials used and the quality of human capital. Customer satisfaction is achieved through this intermediary, "quality," which represents the role it plays in building or damaging the brand's reputation.
- Price is one of the key components of a brand. Brands with higher prices indicate higher quality, while brands with lower prices may signify lower quality. Additionally, there are brands with moderate prices.
- **Innovation:** The degree of innovation represents the brand's ability to provide customers with a new vision and new products through the brand.
- **Distribution:** Choosing the right distribution channels is crucial for the organization's products or brand. It translates the values of the brand, and the brand can have multiple distribution channels, serving as the point where the brand intersects with consumer customers.
- Secondly, intangible values are the most important for a brand because they affect the customer through various factors such as reputation and image. These values include the following:

1. Intrinsic quality: Brand Identity: Represents one of the non-tangible elements of brand development. This relates to a set of physical signals that invoke an individual's five senses, including:

- a) Brand name plays a crucial role in the pronunciation process for easy recall. Without recalling the brand name, it is impossible to create brand recognition.
- b) Usually, the name consists of only one word.
- c) Tactile signals play a crucial role in connecting a product with its target audience, as they allow customers to recall a product without any additional cues. These signals are

typically identified by the product's shape and packaging.

- d) Visual signals are an essential aspect of a brand's identity, and they are characterized by the formulation of letters, color, and writing style. These signals allow customers to identify a brand quickly. Interestingly, customers tend to remember the color of a brand before any other characteristic.
- e) Olfactory and taste signals are more advanced than the previous ones, and it does not prevent brands from having more and more scents. Smell and taste play an important role in the consumer goods sector as they represent continuity more than other elements.

2. Shared quality: The social role of the brand

This translates the social value developed by the brand. A strong brand contributes to society in several roles, including guaranteeing quality.

3. Story quality: Brand image

It is essential to understand the brand story by narrating and understanding its origin and creator. Therefore, most brand histories consist of a hero, and this hero can be the innovator of the brand, making the dialogue between the brand and customers credible.

Types of Brands

According to (Kashkoul, 2016:63) ^[15], (Amhammed, 2024:212) brands can be classified as follows:

- A. Generic Brand refers to a product category that does not include the name of the organization or any other descriptive terms. These products are typically basic commodities that are marketed in an undifferentiated manner because they lack unique characteristics. Examples of such products include salt and sugar. Usually, generic brands are sold at lower prices compared to similar competing brands.
- B. Private Brand is also known as a marketing brand or a distributed brand owned by also known as a marketing or distributed brand, is owned by wholesalers and retailers. The primary characteristic of this brand is that the manufacturers of the products are not known. This type of brand allows wholesalers and retailers to purchase specific products at a lower cost without revealing the identity of the manufacturers.
- C. Manufacturer's Brand is produced by manufacturers and ensures that manufacturers renew products at a certain point of sale. Usually, manufacturer's brands require products that can participate in promotion, distribution decisions, and pricing decisions.

Methods

The design used in this study was descriptive-analytical, which was applied to both the theoretical and field aspects. This approach was chosen because it assists researchers in collecting data. It also provided them with various means to interpret their findings. The study collected data from 60 customers and regular visitors of the store using a questionnaire, which was then analyzed using SPSS.

Results and Discussion

This section tests the research hypotheses that include the relationships and influences between the research variables (Sensory marketing and brand) by using correlation and

regression coefficients at both the overall and partial levels, as follows:

Analyzing the results of the first main hypothesis

This hypothesis states that there is no significant correlation between sensory marketing and brand identity in Mosul chocolate store. Based on the data presented in Table 1, it is evident that there is a significant correlation between sensory marketing as an independent variable and brand identity as a dependent variable at an overall level. The correlation coefficient value of 74.4% and the significant value at the level of 0.01 suggest a strong relationship between the variables. This indicates that sensory marketing can predict and explain the brand identity in the Mosul chocolate store.

Furthermore, by testing partial correlation relationships, the results in Table 1 show a significant correlation between each dimension of sensory marketing (individually) and brand identity. The correlation coefficient values for visual, auditory, tactile, and taste marketing were 0.551, 0.69, 0.424, and 71.0, respectively. These values are significant at a significance level of 0.01, indicating that these dimensions positively affect customer responses and represent a strong means of connecting customers to the researched store and reminding them of it. However, the olfactory marketing dimension had a non-significant correlation with brand identity in the researched store, with a value of 0.134. This indicates that this dimension may not be as effective in explaining the dimensions of the brand identity variable as a whole. Based on the results of the correlation analysis, the first main research hypothesis and its branches are rejected. The alternative hypothesis is accepted, which confirms the existence of that correlation.

Table 1: Correlation relationships between sensory marketing and brand

Dependent variable / Independent variable	Branding		
	Correlation	Sig	Interpretation
Sensory marketing (Overall diminstion)	0.747**	0.00	Significant
Visual marketing	0.69**	0.00	Significant
Audio marketing	0.551**	0.00	Significant
Olfactory marketing	0.134	0.309	Not significant
Tactile marketing	0.424**	0.001	Significant
Taste marketing	0.710**	0.00	Significant

*** ≤ 0.01 N=60

Analyzing the results of the second main hypothesis

The hypothesis suggests that there is no significant effect of sensory marketing, both combined and individual dimensions, on the brand in the researched store. However, upon examining the indicators in Table 2, it becomes evident that there is indeed a significant effect of the combined dimensions of sensory marketing on the brand in the researched store. These dimensions account for 55.7% of the variance in the brand, while the remaining 44.3% represents the effects of other uncontrollable factors or factors not included in the research design.

The significance of the determination coefficient (R^2) is supported by the calculated value of 73.045, which is greater than the tabulated value of 7.093 at a significance level of 0.01 and degrees of freedom (1, 58). This effect is further supported by the regression coefficient (Beta), indicating that a one-unit change in sensory marketing leads to a change in the brand in the researched store by 0.984.

These results suggest that employing sensory marketing dimensions in the researched store, including visual, auditory, olfactory, tactile, and taste marketing, contributes significantly to achieving the brand. This means that the brand largely depends on and derives its enhancing components from its ability to employ sensory marketing dimensions.

To examine the partial effects of each dimension of sensory marketing on the brand in the researched store, the data in Table 2 indicate that each dimension of sensory marketing has a partial effect on the brand when examined individually. Taste marketing had the highest contribution to the effect, explaining 50.4% of the total variations in the brand in the researched store. This is supported by the significance of the calculated value of F, which is 58.987, compared to the tabulated value of 7.093 at a significance level of 0.01 and degrees of freedom (1, 58). The regression coefficient value indicates that the brand changes by 0.595 if gustatory marketing changes by one unit. This effect is further supported by the significance of the calculated value of t, which is 7.680, compared to the tabulated value of 2.392 at a significance level of 0.01. These findings suggest that the Mosul chocolate can enhance and support its brand whenever its customers have a heightened sense of taste when consuming its products.

Visual marketing ranked second in terms of its effect, explaining 47.6% of the total variations in the brand in the researched store. This is supported by the calculated value of F, which is 52.705, compared to the tabulated value of 7.093 at a significance level of 0.01 and degrees of freedom (1, 58). The regression coefficient indicates that a one-unit change in visual marketing leads to a change in the brand in the researched store by 0.658. The significance of the calculated value of t, which is 7.260, compared to the tabulated value of 2.392 at a significance level of 0.01, also supports this effect. This means that customers' perception of visual marketing in the researched store can significantly contribute to enhancing and supporting its brand.

Auditory marketing ranked third, followed by tactile marketing in fourth place, as shown in the mentioned table above.

The olfactory marketing dimension had the least impact, explaining only 1.8% of the total variations in the brand in the researched store. This is supported by the calculated value of F, which is 1.055, compared to the tabulated value of 7.093 at a significance level of 0.01 and degrees of freedom (1, 58). The regression coefficient indicates that a one-unit change in olfactory marketing leads to a change in the brand in the researched store by 0.092. The significance of the calculated value of t, which is 1.027, compared to the tabulated value of 2.392 at a significance level of 0.01, also supports this effect. This means that customers' perception of olfactory marketing in the researched store has minimal contribution to enhancing and supporting its brand. Based on the results of the regression analysis, which confirmed the effect of sensory marketing dimensions (collectively and individually) on supporting the brand in the researched store, the second main research hypothesis, which stated that there is no significant effect of sensory marketing dimensions (collectively and individually) in supporting the brand in the researched store, is rejected.

The alternative hypothesis is accepted; it confirms the presence of an effect.

Table 2: The impact results of sensory marketing on the brand (collectively and individually)

Dependent variable / Independent variable	Statistical results				T
				F	
	B1	R ²	Calculated	Tabulated	
Sensory marketing (Overall diminution)	0.984	0.557	73.045	7.093	8.547
Visual marketing	6.58	0.476	52.705	7.093	7.260
Audio marketing	0.576	0.303	25.238	7.093	5.024
Olfactory marketing	0.092	0.018	1.055	7.093	1.027
Tactile marketing	0.332	0.180	12.747	7.093	3.570
Taste marketing	0.595	0.504	58.987	7.093	7.680

The correlation between the dimensions of the variables

A. The relationship between the dimensions of the independent variable (Sensory marketing)

Table 3 illustrates the relationship between the five dimensions of the sensory marketing variable according to their means and standard deviations for each of them.

Table 3: The correlation and ranking between the dimensions of sensory marketing

Dimensions of sensory marketing	Mean scores	Standard deviations	Ranking
Visual marketing	3.85	0.398	The first
Taste marketing	3.70	0.453	The second
Tactile marketing	3.69	0.486	The third
Audio marketing	3.626	0.363	The fourth
Olfactory marketing	3.44	0.551	The fifth
Average	3.66	0.4502	

Table 3 above shows the ranking of the dimensions of sensory marketing according to customer responses. Visual marketing ranked first among the dimensions, with a mean of (3.85) and a standard deviation of (0.398), indicating that customers in Mosul chocolate store value the lighting, colors, and designs of the store. On the other hand, the olfactory marketing dimension ranked last, with a mean of (3.44) and a standard deviation of (0.551), indicating that customers in this store do not care much about this dimension compared to other dimensions.

B. The correlation between the dimensions of the dependent variable (brand)

Table 4 below illustrates the relationship between the dimensions of the dependent variable, which are tangible and intangible values.

Table 4: Correlation and ranking between the dimensions of the brand

Dimensions of branding	Mean scores	Standard deviations	Order
Tangible values	3.96	0.402	The first
Intangible values	3.77	0.479	The second
Average	3.865	0.44	

From Table 4 above, it is evident that the tangible dimension ranked first, while the intangible dimension ranked second and last among the dimensions of the brand. This is supported by their respective means and standard deviations, which are (3.96, 0.402) and (3.77, 0.479), respectively. This indicates that customers in Mosul chocolate store can easily recall the brand name and perceive it as credible.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

The research has led to several conclusions in light of the

results of the correlation and impact analysis between sensory marketing and brand in the researched field, as follows:

1. Sensory marketing, which includes five dimensions such as visual, olfactory, taste, tactile, and auditory marketing, is a crucial area of focus for organizations. It has a significant impact on customer behavior and encourages them to think creatively and systematically. This, in turn, helps organizations to develop their future prospects and effectively tackle challenges posed by competitors in their external environment.
2. There is a strong and significant correlation between the sensory marketing variable, represented by its five dimensions, and the brand variable.
3. The results also showed a significant effect of the sensory marketing variable, represented by its dimensions, on the brand variable.
4. The research results revealed awareness and perception of the researched store's customers regarding sensory marketing dimensions. However, they varied in their awareness level of these dimensions, with gustatory marketing ranking first and olfactory marketing ranking last.

Second: Proposals: In light of the findings of the current research, some proposals can be presented that would help those in charge of store management when planning in the future regarding the research variables, and among these proposals are:

Recommendations

Based on the results of the current research, some recommendations can be made to help store managers in future planning regarding research variables. These recommendations include:

1. Stimulating the sense of smell by paying attention to pleasant aromas as it has a powerful impact on customers, attracting them to the store continuously.
2. Identifying, understanding, and measuring the feelings and emotions of customers or the target audience.
3. Enjoying calm music that promotes the store's work and encourages customers to return to it.
4. Using questionnaires provided to customers to identify their attitudes towards the researched store and openly recording their observations and suggestions.

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