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Exploring the Dimensions of Multisensory Marketing: A Comprehensive Conceptual Analysis

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ABSTRACT

The document aims to deliver a contemporary summary of Sensory Marketing signals. The offline and online settings have facilitated a sensory engagement between the product and the consumer. The research seeks to comprehend the investigations surrounding Sensory Marketing and moreover offers recommendations for subsequent studies. The research was conducted in many phases according to the methods suggested by Tranfield et al. (2003): preparation, quality assurance, data extraction, and conclusion. The necessity for equilibrium between visual appeal and practicality has prompted the examination of multimodal signals in hospitality branding. Research uncovers various categories of multi-sensory cues, including visual, gustatory, tactile, auditory, and olfactory.

Keywords: Sensory Marketing, multi-sensory experience, Consumer behavior

INTRODUCTION

According to Statista, India's food service market is projected to reach approximately ($126) billion in 2026 and surge toward ($282) billion by 2034, expanding at a robust 10.55% Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR). The industry's rapid expansion is driven by urbanization, rising household incomes, and booming delivery platforms This has transformed the existing operational and multi sensorial models of dining. Customers desire to have memorable experiences which stimulate them both physically and mentally. This paradigm shift from production to a marketing concept gave way to developing the 'marketing of senses,' otherwise known as Sensory Marketing. All and any experience we have with a brand is through their five sensory channels- visual, acoustic, haptic, olfactory, and gestations which largely contributes to three important marketing outcomes- attitude formation, word-of-mouth, and buying decisions(Kaushik & Gokhale, 2021). One of the most burgeoning constructs in the realm of marketing is Sensory Marketing, which presents significant possibilities for exploration. It is well recognized that understanding human behaviour necessitates acknowledging our sensory connection to the world. In contrast to the prevailing theory, which asserts that individuals construct perceived images by interpreting external stimuli, Sensory Marketing theory adopts a bottom-up perspective, highlighting that the external environment influences individuals through their senses and that the resulting long-term memories of physical experiences directly affect attitudes and behaviours (Lv et al., 2020). In addition to instant gratification, multisensory cues have an impact on memory formation, emotional connection, and perceived authenticity—all of which have an impact on loyalty and repeat business(Fadzila et al., 2026).

Most studies isolate individual sensory modalities, such as colour or scent, without examining these together. Thus, there is a need to capture the cues together and that too in different cultural environment. Restaurant competitiveness has increased due to the fast evolution of the global food and hospitality industry. Restaurants must stand out from the competition by using creative strategies that give their patrons unforgettable and emotionally impactful experiences as experiential consumption becomes more and more important in consumer decision-making. In this regard, surroundings that are immersive, sensory-rich, and culturally themed have become important factors in determining customer pleasure, engagement, and long-term loyalty (Fadzila et al., 2026).Moreover, the adaptation of fine dining operations to off- premise experience like dining takeout delivery has resulted into focussing upon innovative service design that is dining takeout packaging(Chen et al., 2026).

The study aims to answer the following questions-

RQ1 What gaps exist in dining/hospitality Sensory Marketing literature?

RQ2 How has the Sensory Marketing literature conceptualized and categorized the sensory modalities (visual, gustatory, tactile, acoustic and olfactory) within dining and hospitality contexts?

RQ3 What implications does current Sensory Marketing literature offer for hospitality practitioners, and what future research is needed to address gaps between academic findings and practical application?

Thus, for the purpose of the study literature has been reviewed from Scopus Database. The paper is organised in the following manner: First the process of conducting the review has been presented. Then the main findings and finally discussion and conclusion.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review, in all its variants, has long been an important tool for assessing the development of any field and, more specifically, for tackling important problems. The review is based upon the methodology proposed by (Tranfield et al., 2003). (1) Review was planned keeping in mind the relevance and the size of the literature. (2) Different data sources like Google Scholar and Scopus database were the main source for literature review. Hence data quality was assessed by referring different sources of knowledge. (3) The search mainly focussed upon studies on Sensory Marketing. Search strategy used was ("Sensory Marketing" AND "Cues") OR ("Sensory Marketing" AND "Food") OR ("Sensory Marketing" AND "Dimensions"). (4) The targeted search encompassed studies published in journals, conference papers, and books. Studies were evaluated using the subsequent methodology: The review was undertaken initially based on the title, subsequently on the abstract, and ultimately through a comprehensive reading of the whole text. The papers underwent content analysis.

Cues were initially inferred from article reading, subsequently confirmed using full text analysis, leading to a corresponding literature review.

The recognized cues are:

1. Visual
2. Tactile
3. Acoustic
4. Olfactory
5. Gustatory

VISUAL CUES

Nosi et al. (2026) stated that visual sensory stimuli hold significant importance since vision frequently serves as the primary sensory pathway for consumers assessing a service setting. Hue, illumination, adornment, merchandise presentation, packaging visual appeal, menu layout, and spatial configuration might influence preliminary perceptions of excellence, coziness, genuineness, worth, and brand identity.

Some researchers(Barbosa et al., 2023) studied the cues with visual properties and concluded that companies offer product through different channels, hence they should consider the colour and pictures throughout all the channels. They further concluded that visual elements could be used as a quality evaluation criterion for the product and the seller. While many researchers(Leng et al., 2022) emphasised upon the use of visual language as a marketing tool by sellers to justify their uniqueness of the product and its further influence on attitude of people. Some researchers(Sagha et al., 2022) studied the effect of background colour congruency on consumer behaviour and found that only when the colour of the background is in harmony with the product's colour does a visual sensory cue improve the emotions, experience, and willingness to purchase the product. Many researchers(Silaban et al., 2023) were of the view that numerous physical variables can influence customer satisfaction and visitor delight, such as décor, amenities, colour illumination, and restaurant configuration .Researchers further suggested restaurants to prioritize the upkeep of a sanitary atmosphere and deliver attentive service to enhance client satisfaction. Incorporating aesthetic stimulation into a restaurant's service has ability to enhance emotional attachment and satisfaction. A study of gourmet food and its packaging by researchers(Chen et al., 2026) showed a greater emphasis on the strength of the package, compartmentalisation and temperature resistance. The findings further showed that consumers choose packaging that blends ecological design principles with performance reliability.

TACTILE CUES

Ranaweera et al. (2021) highlighted that information “collected through touch by the hands” can affect consumer product evaluations since products can differ in their material properties.

Findings from a study by researchers(Leng et al., 2022) showed negative impact of non-contact consumption on online purchase behaviour. The study further recommended the awareness on haptic cues and their use as tactile compensation strategy. Some researchers(Silaban et al., 2023) worked on haptic cues and concluded that the level of comfort and soothing atmosphere significantly contributed towards customer satisfaction. The study focussed upon temperature, furniture and cutlery. The findings of the study indicated that haptics have the potential to contribute towards satisfaction. Fadzila et al., (2026) conducted a study in USA on Sensory Marketing and found touch as a significant factor with highest loading. A study on significance of haptic cues by scholars(Bhatia & Garg, 2021) concluded that contact with food during consumption enhances the pleasurable assessments of the food items. Consequently, the research determined that touch is fundamental to humans and can affect product displays and assessments. Some researchers Bruckdorfer and Büttner (2025) also studied design in food items and found that design had a strong relationship with the sweetness like Comic-style images, such as Kindchenschema(kittens and puppies), are frequently employed on the packaging of child-oriented products, and consumers are under the impression that these products contain significant quantities of sugar and the authors further concluded that product design had a

prominent role in purchase decisions of customers. Zhang, Lyu, and Yang (2026) studied cues in online context and concluded that food packaging serves as the initial interaction between customers and food items, swiftly eliciting cognitive and emotional reactions via visual components including colour, imagery, and form, therefore shaping perceptions of taste, freshness, and quality.

ACOUSTIC CUES

Valenzuela-Gálvez et al. (2024) emphasised that sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch comprise the primary sensory channels. Sales, time in a store, and consumer behavior are the most extensively researched dependent variables in experimental studies, while music is the most extensively researched sound stimulus. Certain studies have assessed the extent to which music can influence the mood of customers, as well as the positive evaluation of the store, product, and advertising.

Some researchers(Sagha et al., 2022) studied auditory effects and concluded that sound experience has the potential to influence individuals' levels of arousal further enhances brand purchase. Silaban et al., (2023) stated that the absence of focus upon auditory cues can increase the level of dissatisfaction among customers. However the mere presence of appropriate music and volume, has no significant impact upon satisfacation. Findings of the study conducted by researchers(Hwang et al., 2020) on the impact of sensorial element upon electronic commerce showed that interactive music improves the experiential value of e-commerce for consumers with minimal levels of involvement. In contrast, consumers who demonstrate a high level of involvement exhibit a higher level of purchase intention in the interactive music condition, as a result of a higher perceived cognitive value. Some researchers(Fadzila et al., 2026) concluded that sound has a siginificant impact upon atmosphere. Despite its significance, the cue is one of the most underutilised sensory element that is often overlooked. Soto-Santos et al. (2026) studied Sensory Marketing and concluded that ambience and lightning captured consumers' attention and further stated that Sensory Marketing exhibited heightened perceptual intensity and significantly impacted purchasing choices, especially via the action dimension. A study on consumer experience management by researchers Nosi et al. (2026) revealed that visual stimuli do not inherently enhance the sensory brand experience; rather, the management of consumer experience in coffee establishments relies on the congruence of environmental signals.

OLFACTORY CUES

Santos et al. (2026) concluded that the sense of smell is crucial for experiencing things and influences how people make decisions. Since smell does not offer advertising saturation, has direct communication with memory, and is still a novel concept as a Sensory Marketing application, brands started using smell as an activator of relationships, emotions, and feelings with their customers.

Findings from a study conducted on imagined scents like coffee by researchers(Sagha et al., 2022) revealed that there were no difference between the effects of sensorial odors and imagined odors as both elicit consumer

response till mental image of scent referent could be created. Results of some studies conducted on cues by researchers(Silaban et al., 2023) showed olfaction an important factor in determining consumer satisfaction as emotions and memories were significantly impacted by the aroma of the food. Some researchers(Cowan et al., 2023) had studied sensory integration into virtual reality and found olfactory cues on the top as it has the potential to increase memory recall. Olfactory cues had the multiplicative effect upon brand response. Yahia Mouammine (2026) emphasized the importance of incorporating non-visual senses; however, their research also revealed a more extensive neglect of the development of multisensory technologies. The notion that digital sensory design is still fragmentary and unevenly developed is further substantiated by the fact that even specialized domains, such as food–technology interactions, exhibit difficulty in integrating critical sensory modalities. A study on consumer coffee buying behaviour by researchers (Soto-Santos et al., 2026) revealed that aroma had the greatest proportion of all sensory cures capturing attention and action of people thus validate the relationship between sensory stimuli and behavioural outcomes.

GUSTATORY CUES

Some researchers (Santos et al., 2026) studied that the experience of flavor may be the most multimodal among our daily encounters. Recent studies conducted by psychologists and cognitive neuroscientists increasingly uncover the intricate multisensory interactions that contribute to taste perceptions, illustrating their reliance on the synthesis of data from all human senses.

Researchers(Fadzila et al., 2026) studied the impact of Sensory Marketing on customer satisfaction in Korean restaurants in USA and found variation in factor loading of taste due to differences in the perception of customers with regards to A la carte and buffet style services. Many researchers(Szocs et al., 2025) evaluated healthiness of food through sensory cues and compared the perception of respondents through cues- visual and gustatory and concluded that when people taste foods with a variety of flavors and ingredients instead of just seeing them, they perceive them as healthier. The research further indicated that that when food is evaluated only on the basis of visual information (as opposed to sampling), the effect may be driven by the prominence of added flavors or substances. Bhatia & Garg (2021) stated that individuals have begun consuming food, not solely to satisfy physiological needs but also to please their senses.The research additionally indicated that engaging many senses (such as taste, touch, and smell) enhances flavor perception more effectively than a marketing strategy focused solely on taste. Yahia Mouammine (2026) illustrated the intricacy of integrating multiple sensory modalities, particularly taste, into technological systems. It is important to note that the authors further recognize the lack of meaningful integration of olfactory interfaces, despite their centrality to flavor perception.

CONCLUSION

This review has shown that Sensory Marketing research in hospitality and dining remains theoretically fragmented, geographically narrow, and methodologically skewed toward controlled settings. Existing work tends to treat sensory modalities in isolation rather than within an integrated framework (Bhatia & Garg, 2021; Cowan et al., 2023), and conceptual models such as Batat and Addis's (2021) Food Experience Design remain empirically untested. Evidence from single national contexts (Silaban et al., 2023; Fadzila et al., 2026) limits generalizability, while experimental studies of sensory-emotional and sensory-perceptual mechanisms (Sagha et al., 2022; Szocs et al., 2025) say little about how these processes operate in authentic, service-intensive dining environments. Few studies connect sensory stimuli to enduring relational outcomes such as loyalty (Lv et al., 2020), and the translation of fine-dining sensory value into takeout formats has only recently begun to receive attention (Çavuş, 2025; Chen et al., 2026). For practitioners, the evidence points to engaging multiple senses across the entire guest journey, recreating in-restaurant cues in packaging and delivery, using digital touchpoints to compensate for absent taste, smell, and touch (Cowan et al., 2023; Hwang et al., 2020; Barbosa et al., 2023), and adapting sensory strategies to local culture while tracking their long-term effects. Finally, although AI has been used to enhance visual and, in a few cases, olfactory or auditory experiences, its potential for multisensory, AI-driven hospitality and retail environments remains largely unexplored. Together, these findings position sensory experience as a central, yet still underdeveloped, source of value in hospitality.

RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

Practical

Hospitality practitioners should engage multiple senses across the whole guest journey rather than relying on a single cue such as scent or lighting. In fine dining, sensory value is hard to separate from physical presence, so takeout and packaging innovations work best when they recreate elements of the in-restaurant experience (Çavuş, 2025; Chen et al., 2026). Digital touchpoints such as images, music, and virtual previews can partly substitute for missing taste, smell, and touch, and are useful for delivery and social discovery (Cowan et al., 2023; Hwang et al., 2020; Barbosa et al., 2023). Sensory strategies should also be adapted to local culture and evaluated against long-term loyalty, not just immediate satisfaction (Silaban et al., 2023; Lv et al., 2020).

Theoretical

Future research should address several open areas. No study has yet integrated gustatory experience with any AI technique. Little work systematically operationalizes multisensory combinations, such as coordinated visual-auditory-tactile design, or links non-visual senses to immersive technologies such as AR/VR or robotics. Studies are also needed that test sensory mechanisms in authentic, service-intensive dining settings, across a wider range of cultural contexts, and against long-term loyalty outcomes (Lv et al., 2020; Silaban et al., 2023).

Limitations of the study

The findings of the research rely on secondary data analysis; however, a quantitative methodology may be employed to enhance the generalizability of the results. Secondly, the quantity of articles examined was limited; future investigators may analyse a greater number of articles. Ultimately, the databases employed for information retrieval were exclusively Scopus and Google Scholar; thus, subsequent researchers might also explore alternative databases such as Web of Science.

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