

The Impact of Sensory Branding on Consumer Preference of Coffee Shops in Colombo, Sri Lanka

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Abstract : The modern coffee shop culture is relatively an emerging concept in Colombo, Sri Lanka and a competitive atmosphere has been created over the years. It is discovered that coffee shops are visited by individuals for different purposes including dine-in, take-away food and beverages, studying, socialization, relaxation, and business meetings/ work. Having countless alternative places to fulfill these objectives, preference in coffee shops is a choice made by the consumers, and in contrast a challenge for coffee shop managers to overcome.

In building a competitive edge towards uniqueness, coffee shops substantially invest in sensory branding techniques as a value creator. Consequently, the research problem of this study is to identify the impact of sensory branding on consumer preference with regards to choosing coffee shops in Colombo, Sri Lanka over the alternatives for different purposes.

The study is conducted as a survey with a sample of 300 coffee shop visitors following a hypothetic deductive approach testing the hypothesis developed based on sensory branding. The results of the study reveal that sensory branding is a successful marketing tool in promoting people to choose coffee shops among other alternatives for purposes such as dining, relaxation, studying and meetings.

Key Words: Sensory Branding; Consumer Preference; Coffee Shops

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I. Introduction

Marketing helps building a strong relationship with stakeholders whereas branding is a key element. Branding acts as the promise to a customer which conveys what to expect and its differentiation. Accordingly, marketers concentrate on techniques to stimulate customer senses uniquely, where sensory branding acts as a marketing tool (Lindstrom, 2005).

Sensory Branding includes 'Marketing techniques that aim to seduce the consumer by using his/her senses to influence feelings and behavior on their preference' (American Marketing Association, 2009). Simply, attract and retain the customers using the power of senses. Today, marketers have identified that more senses appealed, stronger the message would be and therefore try to influence through one or more senses; sight, sounds, smell, touch, and taste. The mostly used sense is 'sight' (visual marketing), highly stimulated by the environment through colors and shapes, for example through the logo and atmosphere. Next, through 'sounds' (auditory marketing) which makes customers remember the brand. Spence (2003) believe that 75% of the emotions are generated by smell (olfactory marketing), where both natural and artificial smells are used by companies. Taste (gustative marketing) is mainly done through samples, tasting, and making blind-tests. The final sense is the touch (tactile marketing) where customers are attracted by quality and comfort through the materials used.

The ten brands that most effectively leverage multiple senses as per Lindstrom (2005) are Singapore Airlines, Apple, Disney, Mercedes Benz, Marlboro, Tiffany, Louis Vuitton, Bang & Olufsen, Nokia and Harley Davidson.

Sensory branding is applied in different industries at different levels. Particularly, service industries find it harder as services cannot be touched, tasted, felt or seen, where sensory branding plays a vital role. For example, Singapore Airline uses visual theme consistently, incorporates the same scent (Stefan Floridian Waters) through flight attendants, hot towels, and concentrates on uniforms and appearance of the staff.

In Sri Lanka, sensory branding is relatively novel which does not have presence in many industries but seen on the businesses which serve the upper class citizens in Colombo. For example, department stores, top restaurants, franchise businesses, hotels and coffee shops. Particularly, modern coffee shop concept is rather

new in Sri Lanka although coffee has a long history. It has given priority to satisfy the senses, therefore uses sensory branding as a secret weapon to attract customers and improve brand loyalty.

Around the world, sensory branding in modern coffee shops is famous to overcome the competition by standing out. Different methods of appealing through five senses comprises to the uniqueness of the brand. Website design, brochures, colors, design, theme and architecture are examples that coffee shops use for branding through sight. Smell is used through a unique aroma whereas, jingles and music are used to stimulate through sound. The textures, fabrics (touch) used are stimulating to show the luxury and comfort where the customers become more bound to the brand without direct consciousness. In terms of the taste, coffee shops do wonders to build brand loyalty and gain customer satisfaction.

II. Research Problem

There is a visible growth in the global coffee shop culture where coffee is the world's second most popular drink after water. In terms of the coffee shops in the globe, sales average of a average coffee shop is 230 cups per day (Orey, 2012) which depicts the significance. In Sri Lanka, 'Ceylon tea' is the market leader of beverages but many coffee shops have come into place at an alarming rate with the modern specialty coffee culture.

These modern coffee shops do not necessarily only provide coffee, but also other products and services. There is a high demand for coffee shops mainly in Colombo and many visit coffee shops for variety of reasons: beverages, food, and mostly atmosphere. Few of the main players in Colombo are: White & CO, Java Lounge, Coco Verandah, The Coffee Bean & Tea Leaf, Barista, The Commons Coffee House, London House of Coffee, and Tea Avenue.

The target market mainly includes young adults between ages of 15-24 and adults between ages of 25-50 who are not only coffee lovers, but also all the individuals who visit coffee shops including leisure customers, working crowd, couples, and students who visit for various reasons such as dining and take-away, relaxation, studying, working and other purposes. These customers have many alternative options for their needs, but people get attracted to coffee shops. The researchers believe that sensory branding is the reason for this choice and examined through this study.

Businesses make substantial investments on sensory branding as it is believed as a sales booster and a value creator of the organizations. In spite of the investment and concentration given on sensory branding, it is uncertain about the fact whether the consumers do value it or not. In other words, impact of sensory branding on customer preference is vague and is difficult to prove the need of the same. Without a transparent view on the relationship, marketers tend to continue investing on multi-sensory branding.

Consequently, the research problem of this study is to identify the impact of sensory branding on consumer preference of choosing Coffee shops in Colombo, Sri Lanka.

III. Research Objectives

The research objectives for this study are:

To identify dimensions of sensory branding

To analyze the impact of sensory branding on customer's choice of coffee shops

To provide recommendations to marketing practitioners.

IV. Significance of the research

There is a significant research gap as marketers are unaware of importance and senses have been neglected on marketing strategies (Hultén et al. 2009; Hultén 2011). A comprehensive knowledge would be supportive as an insight for marketing teams of coffee shops and other practitioners including the investors, interior and exterior designers, newcomers and employees in identifying and exercising the best practices in the industry. Furthermore, the study results could be used as a guideline for future researchers and academics explaining the relationship and the level of impact of multi-sensory branding on consumer behavior.

V. Literature review

5.1 Sensory Branding

Marketing has taken different facets over time which has shifted from transactional to relationship to sensory marketing (Hultén et al, 2011). Branding is the establishment of a strong relationship between the product and the customer and as per Keller (2013), branding is the "means to distinguish the goods of one producer from those of another".

Most vital branding element has now become sensory branding which is seducing the customer by influencing their senses (American Marketing Association, 2009). Sensory branding is the most common form of engagement between brand and consumer (Lindstrom, 2005). Hultén, Broweus and Van Dijk (2009) have explained that the result of a sensory experience is the brand identity.

In 1973, Philip Kotler also has emphasized the importance of atmosphere as a strategic tool for retailers. Over time, all five senses have become channels of branding and with the advancement, the companies tend to integrate two or more senses, where the brands appeal to multi senses which are more advanced and lucrative (Multi-sensory branding).

Due to the intangibility of services customers do not get the opportunity to see the quality of the service (McDougall & Snetsinger, 1990). As per Goldkuhl and Styven (2007) the five senses play an important role in making the service tangible, which helps to overcome the problem that customers encounter.

Many authors have identified the elements of senses which affect branding and many authors have identified the same components as the elements of sensory branding giving different aspects on how they look at the scenario of marketing as summarized in the table 1.

Table 1: Elements of sensory branding

Author	Elements of Sensory Branding
Uddin (2011)	Sight – Brand look, Sound- Brand tone, Taste – Brand flavor, Smell – Brand scent, Touch – Brand texture
Rupini and Nandagopal (2015)	Sight - Visual, Sound – Auditory, Taste – Gastronomic, Smell – Atmospheric, Touch – Tactile
Lindstrom (2007)	Sight - 58% of significance, Sound - 41% of significance, Taste - 31% of significance, Smell - 45% of significance, Touch - 25% of significance
Genuario (2007)	Sight, Sound, Taste, Smell, Touch
Hultén (2011)	Sight - Visual, Sound – Auditory, Taste – Gastronomic, Smell – Atmospheric, Touch – Tactile
Bartholmé and Melewar (2016)	Sight – Visual identity, Sound – Auditory identity, Taste – Gustatory identity, Smell – Olfactory identity, Touch – Tactile identity

Rupini and Nandagopal (2015) have pointed out the senses, sensations as well as the sensory expressions which a firm can use to achieve the purpose of branding as presented in table 2.

Table 2.: Senses, Sensations and Sensory Expressions

Senses	Sensations	Sensory Expressions
Sight	Visual	Design, Color of Packaging and Style, Graphics, Exterior and Interior
Smell	Atmospheric	Product Congruence, Intensity and Sex Atmosphere, Advertency, Theme Scent Brand, Signature Scent
Sound	Auditory	Jingle, Voice and Music Atmosphere, Attentiveness, Theme Signature Sound, Sound Brand
Taste	Gastronomic	Interplay, Lifestyle, Delight, Environment knowledge
Touch	Tactile	Material, Surface Temperature, Weight Form, Steadiness

Source: Rupini and Nandagopal (2015)

As per LeFebvre (2010) the idea behind sensory branding is that humans get more aware of brands when all five senses are incorporated. Lindstorm (2005) has stated that “The brand building of the future will move from a two-sensory approach to a multisensory approach” and he also states that “a total sensory experience would at least double, if not triple, the consumer’s ability to memorize the brand”. Each of the five senses provide an experience whereas all the five senses together create a whole perspective of a ‘sensory experience’ (Hultén et al, 2006).

5.2 Consumer Preference

Consumer preference is the underlying foundation of demand and accordingly it is a model on how the consumer’s behave (Daud, 2013). The individuals have a set of preferences and values which are shaped by culture, education, individual tastes and other factors.

Consumer preference is a part and a result of the consumer behavior. Understanding the consumer preference/behavior and knowing the consumers are very complicated. This is because the customers can say one thing and do another. Deep motivational aspects would not even touch their thoughts. The response may be changed in the last minute with different influences (Subaskaran and Anojan, 2015). According to Aaker (1991) and Keller (1997), consumer choice is affected by brand awareness and brand identity.

5.3 Relationship between sensory branding and consumer preference

Hultén et al. (2009) expresses the importance of human senses on consumers’ purchasing process which is approved by Peck and Childers (2008) by emphasizing the significance of recognizing the human senses in terms of consumer behavior. According to Hultén et al. (2009), sensory marketing model emphasizes on measures taken by a firm to treat customers intimately and personally, whereas to generate customer value they should give brand experiences and sensory atmospheres.

Sayadi et al. (2015) explains that a customer is often driven towards a particular brand due to its sensory experience and sensory branding is used to create subconscious triggers which affect consumer perception and choices. He also point out that today's customer does not have sufficient time to get attracted to products via advertisements, and therefore sensory branding is very important to enrich the experience of the brand. Uddin (2011) has mentioned that it is important to concentrate on sight and sound in order to share the identity of a brand. Nevertheless, it is also required to combine the other senses to create an emotional atmosphere to give a memorable experience of the brand to the customer.

The Servicescape framework of Wakefield and Blodgett (1996) shows the components of environmental dimensions which contain all the sensory branding elements. With the elements customer perceives a certain quality of the product, the customer behavior could get affected such as making a repeat purchase.

Some studies have shown a different perspective on the relationship between sensory branding and consumer preference/ behavior. The study of Grębosz & Wrońska (2013) shows that the sensory cues have a positive impact on consumer preference, but combination of different cues together could build a worse impact which could lead to damage the evaluations of the products or the environment. In other words, unmatched circumstances could result in risky consequences. Pentz and Gerber's (2013) study on Brandy show negative result as sensory branding has made the consumers reduce their preference due to too much of appeal. In conclusion the researchers say that for specific product categories, consumers could experience sensory overloads and therefore could result in reduced consumer experience.

VI. Methodology

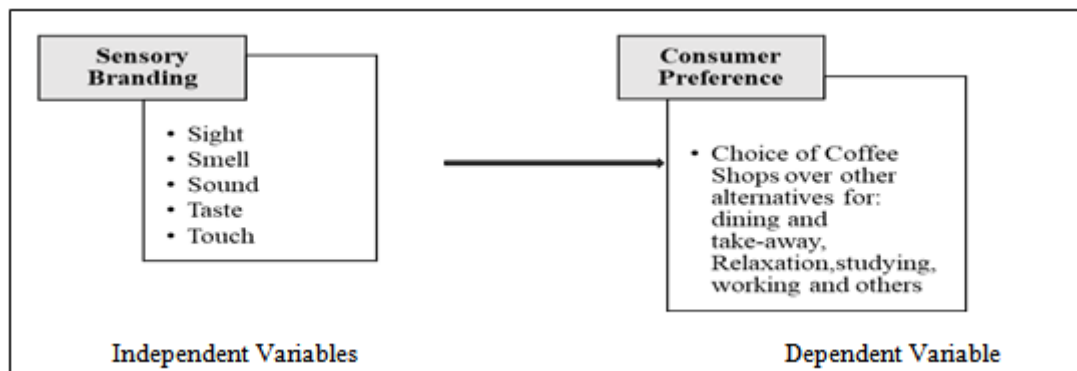
6.1 The conceptual framework and operationalization of concepts

The formulated research question is:

“What is the impact of sensory branding on consumer preference of coffee shop over the other alternatives in Colombo, Sri Lanka?”

The conceptual model is generated with the support of literature review and the hypotheses are developed accordingly.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework



The hypotheses are developed as follows:

H1₁: There is a significant impact of sight as a sensory appeal on the choice of coffee shops over alternatives for dining and take-away, relaxation, studying, working and others

H2₁: There is a significant impact of smell as a sensory appeal on the choice of coffee shops over alternatives for dining and take-away, relaxation, studying, working and others

H3₁: There is a significant impact of sound as a sensory appeal on the choice of coffee shops over alternatives for dining and take-away, relaxation, studying, working and others

H4₁: There is a significant impact of taste as a sensory appeal on the choice of coffee shops over alternatives for dining and take-away, relaxation, studying, working and others

H5₁: There is a significant impact of touch as a sensory appeal on the choice of coffee shops over alternatives for dining and take-away, relaxation, studying, working and others

Operationalization helps removing the ambiguity of written work by defining all relevant variables in a way to be objectively measured as depicted in table 3.

Table 3: Operationalization of variables

Concept	Dimension	Indicators
Sensory Branding	Sight	Design/ Architecture/ Exterior Interior/ Layout design
		Colors (Shade, intensity, value)
		Graphics/ Theme
		Lighting
		Cleanliness
	Smell	Theme Scent Brand/ Signature Scent/ Ambient Smell
	Sound	Music
		Jingle / Theme Signature Sound
	Taste	Flavor/ unique combinations of coffee, origin, brewing, grinding methods
		Samples tasting
Touch	Material/ texture	
	Temperature	
Concept	Indicator	
Consumer Preference	Choice of a coffee shop over other alternatives (such as restaurants, fast-food shops) for dining and take-away food and beverages	
	Choice of a coffee shop over other alternatives (such as parks) for relaxation	
	Choice of a coffee shop over other alternatives (such as library, classroom) for studying	
	Choice of a coffee shop over other alternatives (such as office) for work/ business meetings	
	Choice of a coffee shop over other alternatives for other purposes	

6.2 Research Design & Data Collection

The researcher has followed the sequence and made choices in methodology as elaborated by the ‘research onion’ model of Saunders et al. (2006). Accordingly, the positivism philosophy is adopted as the study is done using quantitative techniques and then developing logical calculations to build explanatory theories. As the study develops hypotheses on an existing theory and due to; quantitative data gathering, structured approach, correlational relationships, and moving from theory data, the deductive approach is applied, whereas the strategy is survey based.

Study uses mixed method with a greater weight on the findings based on the data collected through structured questionnaire where numerical data is collected and analysed applying statistical tests while qualitative data through an in-depth interviews are used to follow up on the findings through quantitative data analysis.

The questionnaires were distributed among the coffee shop visitors of Colombo and through internet based methods (Google forms, email) following convenience sampling. The total number of respondents in the sample was 300. In-depth interviews were only used to add value to the quantitative analysis by focusing on a different perspective; interviewing the marketers/ coffee shop managers.

The population consists of the coffee lovers and all those who visit coffee shops which include the leisure customers, working crowd, couples, students and others who visit for dining and take-away, relaxation, studying, working and other purposes in Colombo, Sri Lanka. The majority would be young adults between the ages of 15-24, adults between the ages of 25-50 and above age 50.

The questionnaire consisted of questions to understand the demographic background of the respondents and questions on perception towards sensory branding practiced in coffee shops, based on the indicators developed in the operationalisation of variables of conceptual framework. The questions related to the conceptual framework were presented on a 5 point Likert scale where 5=strongly agree and 1 = strongly disagree. The Data analysis was conducted using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) software for gathered numerical data with descriptive statistics, correlation analysis and simple linear regression analysis.

VII. Findings

The data was analysed based on demographic background of the respondents initially and a descriptive analysis of the sensory branding dimensions followed by test of hypothesis. The quantitative data was tested for reliability and validity.

7.1 Analysis of demographic factors.

Most of the coffee shop visitors were found to be in the age range of 21 to 30 years which amounts to 58%. More than 50% of the sample were students and full time employees and they were mostly educated up to graduate and postgraduate levels (33% and 16% respectively) and 20% of the sample were undergraduates. Most of the coffee shop visitors (45%) were relatively high income earners with monthly household income exceeding LKR 200,000. Coffee Bean and Tea Leaf, Tea Avenue and Barista were the most visited coffee shops in Colombo respectively. The frequency of visits to coffee shops were mostly on a weekly basis as 38%

visited weekly followed by 32% who visited coffee shops on a monthly basis. The main reason to visit coffee shops was found to be socialization as 41% opted coffee shops as a place to socialize. The time duration spent in coffee shops per visit varied from less than 10 minutes to more than 2 hours. However, 64% of the coffee shop visitors spent 30 minutes to 2 hours per visit in coffee shops. The monthly spending in coffee shops were between LKR 1000-2000 for 73% of the sample. The analysis of the demographics reveal that coffee shops were much visited by relatively more educated and high income earning individuals. Further, coffee shops are mostly chosen for the purpose of socializing. The results of demographic analysis of coffee shop visitors are shown in table 4.

Table 4: Analysis of demographic factors

Variable	Characteristics	N	%
Gender	Male	189	63%
	Female	111	37%
Age	11-20 years	39	13%
	21-30 years	174	58%
	31-40 years	42	14%
	41-50 years	27	9%
	Over 50 years	18	6%
Current Occupational Status	Student	76	25%
	Part-time Employee	17	6%
	Full-time employee	106	35%
	Self-employed	53	18%
	Unemployed	45	15%
Highest Educational Level	Other	3	1%
	Ordinary Level	18	6%
	Advanced Level	45	15%
	Professional Qualification	30	10%
	Undergraduate	60	20%
Monthly Household Income	Graduate	99	33%
	Post graduates	48	16%
	LKR 60,000 and below	54	18%
	LKR 60,000 to LKR 100,000	45	15%
	LKR 100,001 to LKR 150,000	30	10%
Number of coffee shop visits	LKR 150,001 to LKR 200,000	36	12%
	LKR 200,001 and above	135	45%
	Daily	12	4%
	Weekly	114	38%
Favorite Coffee Shop	Monthly	96	32%
	Rarely	78	26%
	Coffee Bean	76	25%
	Tea Avenue	43	14%
	Barista	36	12%
	Commons	30	10%
	Java Lounge	18	6%
	Embazzy	15	5%
Bakes by Bella	14	5%	
Main reasons to visit coffee shops	Other	68	22%
	Work	21	7%
	Business Meetings	30	10%
	Studying	15	5%
	Socialization	123	41%
	Dine-in	51	17%
Time spent in coffee shops	Take-away food	60	20%
	Less than 10 minutes	24	8%
	10 minutes – 30 minutes	57	19%
	30 Minutes - 1 hour	102	34%
	1 Hour – 2 Hours	90	30%
Money spent on coffee shops	More than 2 Hours	27	9%
	Less than LKR 1000	60	20%
	Between LKR 1001- 2000	219	73%
	Between LKR 2001- 3000	15	5%
	Between LKR3001- 4000	3	1%
More than 4001	3	1%	

7.2 Analysis of quantitative data collected through 5 point Likert scale

7.2.1 Testing the reliability and validity of data

Initially, a factor analysis was conducted to test uni-dimensionality of variables and to analyze reliability and validity of data. The sample taken for the study is based on the three hundred (300) responses of coffee shop visitors in Colombo.

‘Rotated Component Matrix’ (table 5) shows how variables are merged together as groups, as the outcome of the analysis of the factor loadings. The indicators of each factor is numbered. For example, the questions under sight are presented through sight_1 to sight_5.

Table 5: Factory analysis

	Rotated Component Matrix ^a				
	Component				
	1	2	3	4	5
Touch_2	.716				
Touch_5	.698				
Touch_4	.684				
Touch_1	.676				
Touch_3	.631				
Sight_1		.699			
Sight_2		.610			
Sight_4		.606			
Sight_3		.568			
Sight_5		.563			
Taste_4			.816		
Taste_2			.806		
Taste_5			.796		
Taste_3			.736		
Taste_1			.690		
Sound_5				.765	
Sound_3				.712	
Sound_4				.691	
Sound_1				.629	
Sound_2				.621	
Smell_1					.769
Smell_3					.729
Smell_2					.715
Smell_4					.553
Smell_5					.486

As all the variables were separately grouped, the questionnaire and measures were considered appropriate. Statistical tests were conducted to test the reliability and construct validity including the tests for convergent validity and discriminant validity.

Validity is the extent to which a concept is accurately measured with regards to a quantitative study (Heale and Twycross, 2015). Accordingly convergent validity and discriminant validity are measured where convergent validity assesses the degree to which a measure is correlated with other measures that it is theoretically predicted to correlate and discriminant validity measures whether the latent constructs which should not correlate with each other are actually not related.

This study adopted the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test, the Bartlett's test of sphericity, Average variance extracted (AVE) and Composite reliability (CR) to measure the convergent validity. A brief description of the threshold limits applicable with the measures as described by Fornell & Larcker (1981) are as follows:

KMO value: Ranges from 0-1 and the value should be greater than 0.5 to meet the minimum threshold to satisfy the decision criteria and value being bigger the better.

Bartlett's test of sphericity: A measure to test the inter item correlations within each dimension. The p-value of the significance test should to be lesser than 0.05 for the correlations to be significantly deviating from an identity matrix

Average Variance Extracted (AVE): A measure of the shared or common variance in a latent variable and the value to be greater than 0.5 to be valid

Composite Reliability (CR) is a measure of internal consistency considering the varying factor loadings of the items. CR values should be greater than 0.7 to be acceptable.

Reliability can be assessed by calculating internal consistency of measures through inter-item consistency reliability is measured through Cronbach's coefficient alpha. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient should exceed 0.7 to be satisfactory

Table 6: Results of the convergent analysis and reliability analysis

Variable	KMO	Bartlett's Test	AVE	CR	Cronbach's Alpha
Threshold	>0.5	Sig: <0.05	>0.5	>0.7	>0.7
Independent Variable					
Sight	0.862	0.000	0.71	0.92	0.896
Smell	0.841	0.000	0.69	0.91	0.886
Sound	0.881	0.000	0.72	0.92	0.902
Taste	0.883	0.000	0.78	0.94	0.933
Touch	0.880	0.000	0.77	0.94	0.929
Dependent Variable					
Choice of coffee shops over other alternatives	0.818	0.000	0.61	0.89	0.845

The results clearly depict that all the variables meet the minimum threshold limit where decision criteria are satisfied.

As per Fornell & Larcker, (1981), the value of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) of each of the dimension should be higher than the squared correlation coefficient the dimension has with other dimensions for the discriminant validity to be satisfied.

Table7: Discriminant validity statistics

		Sight	Smell	Sound	Taste	Touch
Sight		AVE= 0.71				
	Pearson Correlation	.742**	AVE= 0.69			
Smell	Squared correlation	.551				
	Pearson Correlation	.745**	AVE= 0.72	.731**		
Sound	Squared correlation	.555				
	Pearson Correlation	.713**	.676**	.662**	AVE= 0.78	
Taste	Squared correlation	.508				
	Pearson Correlation	.771**	.694**	.759**	.683**	AVE= 0.77
Touch	Squared correlation	.594				

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Developed by researchers

As per the statistics provided in table 7, each construct has AVE greater than the squared correlation it has with other constructs, ensuring a satisfactory level of discriminant validity.

Consequently, with all the results of the reliability and validity analyses, the questionnaire of the research is highly acceptable to achieve the research objectives.

7.3 Descriptive analysis of the independent and dependent variables

The independent and dependent variables were descriptively analysed to understand the extent to which the sensory branding methods are practiced in coffee shops and the preference given towards coffee shops among other alternatives by the respondents.

Table 8: Descriptive analysis of independent and dependent variables

Measure	Sight	smell	sound	Taste	Touch	Preference for coffee shops
N: Valid	300	300	300	300	300	300
Mean	4.1054	3.9963	4.0493	4.2362	4.0539	3.8152
Median	4.2	4	4.2	4.4	4	4.0
Mode	4	4	4	5	4	4
Std. Deviation	0.67638	0.67489	0.71448	0.78278	0.73271	0.76664
Skewness	-1.25	-0.951	-1.306	-1.359	-1.25	-0.693
Range	4	4	4	4	4	4
Minimum	1	1	1	1	1	1
Maximum	5	5	5	5	5	5

The descriptive statistics of the variables indicate that all five dimensions of sensory branding are practiced at a high level as all three measures of central tendency mean, median and mode are around 4, the “Agree” category of the Likert scale used. Further, the negative skewness indicate that answers are mostly clustered above the neutral level of 3 in the scale. The descriptive statistics of the dependent variable also indicate that the coffee shops are given a preference above other alternatives for relaxation, meetings, studying and socializing.

7.4 Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis testing is conducted for each of the independent variables with the dependent variable to assess the relationship. This is done using the tests; Pearson’s Correlation Coefficient and Linear Regression.

Hypothesis	Variable	Pearson Correlation		Regression Analysis		Results of the hypotheses
		Pearson Coefficient	Significance	R Square	Significance	
H1	Sight	0.616	.000	0.379	.000	Accepted
H2	Smell	0.547	.000	0.299	.000	Accepted
H3	Sound	0.562	.000	0.316	.000	Accepted
H4	Taste	0.592	.000	0.350	.000	Accepted
H5	Touch	0.611	.000	0.373	.000	Accepted

Pearson’s Correlation Coefficient (r) for tests of sensory appeals and customer preference of coffee shops takes values closer to +1, which reveal a strong positive relationship between the independent and dependent variables. Accordingly, null hypothesis gets rejected and the study becomes statistically significant as per decision criteria of ‘p’ value of 0.000 been lesser than ‘α’ value of 0.01.

In conclusion, as ‘r’ value is significant at a 0.01 significance level it is evident that there is significant impact of sensory appeals on the choice of coffee shops over alternatives for dining and take-away, relaxation, studying, working and other purposes.

7.5 Analysis of interview findings

The qualitative data analysis was conducted for better understanding on the relationship and to develop insights of coffee shop managers which completes an overall picture. The data was gathered by conducting interviews with managers of first four of favorite coffee shops as per quantitative study, namely Coffee Bean & Tea Leaf, Tea Avenue, Barista and The Commons.

According to the interviewee responses, coffee shops use many sensory tools to improve the appeal of the customers and the following statements prove the same.

The sense appeal was addressed with interior decorations done with tea and coffee-based products and ideas such as walls done with tea boxes. Presenting food and beverages in an eye-catching manner, providing specialized coffees with an extra effort of writing unique wordings in each of the cups were a few steps taken. To encourage the customers to spend more time, the coffee shops have introduced televisions, games, musical instruments (guitar), magazines and books. Further, following color themes is also considered significant where employee uniforms, sofas, menu boards on wall, menu cards, other decorations are all based on one color theme. Further, having themes to encourage target segments of customers was found to be a common idea. For example, a theme such as love encourages couples with pictures of love and seating made for two individuals. Having branches at attractive locations is also considered by all coffee shops to attract customers.

Enhancing smell appeal was not found to be given much priority by three of the four coffee shop managers interviewed as those coffee shops did not concentrate on a specific signature scent other than ‘Barista’ having a highly noticeable coffee aroma.

All coffee shops have addressed the sound appeal with a very soft music played in the mornings till afternoon, and a bit high pitch music played in the night. This arrangement was found to be facilitating customers who come for business meetings, and studying in the morning hours who would not like to get disturbed.

Improving the variety of dishes and beverages and their tastes was a key concern of coffee shops to address the taste appeal. Tea Avenue in this case provides unique experience of Tea tasting which most of the customers including foreigners are attracted. In a different perspective, two of the coffee shops have a unique way of appealing though the taste. Offering Sri Lankan taste with Western food in a hybrid manner was found to be very appealing to Sri Lankans. Offering Sri Lankan versions of sandwiches and waffles with Sri Lankan curry are a few examples.

Coffee shop managers also believe that comfort and relaxation have a great say in the time spent by the customers. The tools used by coffee shops for appealing touch are mostly broad choice of seating arrangements from sofas, private rooms to table and chairs in the back yards. These options are offered as the customers visit with different purposes and to fulfill those with high comfort and relaxation.

Moreover, the coffee shops go to an extent to consider that they should satisfy the customers by providing the best service and comfort to the customers as they are choosing the particular coffee shops over many other alternatives (for example, to study there are alternatives of libraries, home, with friends etc), which on the other hand is to win the competition over the alternatives.

With the interview findings it was found that taste is the second most concentrated sense of appeal which comes after sight. All of the four coffee shops in the interviews have strongly emphasized that the taste should be right to attract and retain the customers.

VIII. Conclusions

Many of the researchers believe that incorporation of five senses facilitate a better customer experience. Few of the adopted sayings include; Humans get more aware of brands when all five senses are incorporated (LeFebvre, 2010), each of the five senses provide an experience whereas all the five senses together create a whole perspective of a 'sensory experience' (Hultén et al, 2006) and more the consumer is involved with the senses, more the remembrance of the brand would be (Djurovic, 2008).

Providing an opportunity for the customers to get appealed in two or more measures is very effective in coffee shops as the findings of the quantitative analysis show the positive impact of the senses on consumer preference in choosing a coffee shop. Wright (2006) has also critically argued that investing on one of the senses would not have any impact on consumer behavior because the senses rarely operate in isolation. Therefore, multi-sensory branding is a better option for better results as presented in literature as well as the research findings.

As per the qualitative findings, it is evident that the managers tend to concentrate on all five senses with or without purposely knowing the exact impact that appeals make. Also, it can be noticed that the sensory tools are used at different levels by different coffee shops which matches their concept.

The case study of Uddin (2011) on Coca Cola has similar findings with the research findings where it is identified that Coca Cola has a great impact on consumer brand identity with the taste, visual, and tactile aspects. Similarly, sight, taste and touch aspects together provide a better positive impact rather than adding sound and smell but each senses individually provides a great impact. According to the managers of coffee shops, it is also understandable that sight, taste and touch are given priority consecutively, while scent and music are almost norms which are not being given high efforts to create better.

As a result, the management of coffee shops should take necessary measures by identifying the particular cues and not to appeal the customers in a way they get negatively affected.

The results illustrated and hypothesis tests conducted confirmed that each of the sensory appeal namely; sight, smell, sound, taste and touch have a strong positive impact on the consumer's preference in choosing a coffee shop over other alternatives for dining and take-away, relaxation, studying, working and other purposes.

IX. Implications and Recommendations

A number of practical implications are drawn by conducting this research which could be used as constructive ideas by coffee shop owners, marketers and also retailers.

The initial section of the analysis presented general information (demographics) of the respondents who are also the coffee shop visitors and this information is vastly essential to understand the target market which is being catered. With the contribution from the study, not only the coffee shops, but also different types of businesses can improve their understanding on their role in implementing the marketing and sensory branding related strategies.

Although the 'modern coffee shop culture' is quite new to Sri Lanka; it is growing since the beginning and becoming exceptionally competitive with innovative marketing ideas. Here, innovative initiatives are made to gain a competitive advantage over others in terms of appealing through sight, sound, taste, smell and touch where the customers are manipulated in gaining their loyalty towards the businesses. The Coffee Bean and Tea Leaf is the mostly preferred coffee shop chain in Colombo as per the results and the rest of the companies are also competing along.

Learning about the impact of multi-sensory branding is worthy in transmitting the concept into practicalities of coffee shops. With the gathered knowledge, it is now a fact that one sensory cue alone cannot successfully be implemented towards high return and therefore two or more appeals would expand the positive impact.

For example, the coffee shop could examine and make the atmosphere better by using the right level of lights and appealing colors prioritize in store design and layout, most importantly focus on cleanliness and maintenance including all interior and exterior elements which stimulate the sight. Additionally, the right type of music, concentration on the aroma of the outlet, and a unique coffee aroma and having a variety of food and beverages for a better choice etc. could bring attraction to the coffee shops.

Alternatively, it is also a fact that any of the sensory appeals together cannot provide the results that marketers are expecting, as the combinations of appeals could bring out adverse effects on sales and attractiveness of the business. On this note, it is evident that the ideal combination should be originated first with the aim of continuing and enhancing for perfect business outcomes. Consequently, the researchers suggest

the marketers of coffee shops and others who are affected through the study to perform pre-tests to discover the best matching combinations of sensory cues to pay attention to.

A notable motivational reason should exist for customers to choose coffee shops over other alternatives. For example, customers who hold business meetings or study at coffee shops should have a significant reason to choose over other alternatives such as office spaces, libraries, restaurants etc. As per the findings, many of the customers come to dine in or take away food from coffee shops when they have options such as dine-in restaurants, other take-away outlets all around, which shows that the impact of sensory branding is very high in giving first preference to coffee shops.

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