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Level of Sensory Marketing Strategy Practices by Café Establishments in Tangub City

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Abstract

Aim: This study assessed the level of sensory marketing strategies implemented by café establishments in Tangub City and determined which among the five sensory dimensions—sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch—most strongly influences customer satisfaction and loyalty.

Methodology: A descriptive quantitative research design was employed using a modified and validated survey questionnaire. The instrument measured customer perceptions of sensory marketing across visual (sight), auditory (sound), olfactory (smell), gustative (taste), and tactile (touch) dimensions. Data were collected from 336 customers of ten selected cafés in Tangub City.

Results: Findings indicated that customers rated the overall sensory marketing strategies of cafés as very high. Among the five dimensions, tactile marketing (touch) was the most dominant, with factors such as physical comfort, ambiance, and quality of materials significantly shaping customer perception and preference.

Conclusion: The study concludes that sensory marketing plays a crucial role in enhancing customer experiences in Tangub City cafés, with tactile elements being the most influential. These findings highlight the importance of integrating multi-sensory strategies to strengthen customer satisfaction and loyalty.

Keywords: Sensory marketing, visual, auditory, olfactory, gustative, tactile, café establishments, Tangub City

INTRODUCTION

Sensory marketing is a marketing strategy that appeals to consumers' senses to enhance their experience and influence their purchasing behavior. This strategy has gained significant traction globally, particularly within the café industry, where creating a multi-sensory experience is key to attracting and retaining customers. Companies like Starbucks and Costa Coffee have successfully integrated sensory marketing to build strong emotional connections with their customers. Through visual, auditory, olfactory, gustatory, and tactile experiences, these international café chains create an immersive environment that not only attracts customers but also strengthens brand loyalty.

In the Philippines, the café industry has witnessed rapid growth, with both local coffee shops and international chains competing for the attention of an increasingly sophisticated consumer base. Filipino café-goers are becoming more selective, considering not only the quality of food and drinks but also the atmosphere of the establishment. Sensory marketing has become a popular tool for businesses in the food service industry to create lasting impressions and differentiate themselves in a competitive market.

In Tangub City, several local café establishments have adopted sensory marketing strategies in an effort to enhance customer experiences. However, preliminary interviews with café owners reveal that some customers are not returning, and negative feedback has been received regarding the overall ambiance and sensory appeal. Customers who were interviewed indicated that taste and a pleasant atmosphere were crucial factors in their decision to revisit a café, while an unappealing environment could deter repeat visits.

According to Craig (2022), businesses use different senses to create a positive impression for a brand, win customers' attention and trust, and make a lasting impression by stimulating the senses. Hussain (2019) supported this view, noting that this marketing tactic works by providing rewards to the recipient's senses, including sight, sound, taste, touch, and smell, in order to complete the purchasing process. Effective marketing tactics are thus

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developed by taking into account customers' senses, particularly in the café industry. Furthermore, sensory marketing can be categorized into visual marketing (sight), scent or aroma marketing (smell), haptic or tactile marketing (touch), and auditory marketing (sound) (Strach, 2018). Lastly, Manzano et al. (2019) explained that sensory marketing is recognized as an essential tool for strengthening the connection between brand and consumer by stimulating all the senses and generating emotions.

Despite the growing use of sensory marketing strategies in global and national contexts, there is a noticeable gap in research on its application in local, small-scale café establishments in the Philippines, particularly in Tangub City. There are limited empirical studies that measure the impact of sensory marketing on customer retention and buying decisions at the local café level. This study aims to fill this gap by exploring how sensory marketing influences customer behavior in café establishments in Tangub City.

Café business establishments have been using sensory marketing strategies to attract and retain customers. However, initial interviews with some café owners in Tangub revealed that they observed certain customers rarely returning, while others provided negative feedback. Customers interviewed shared that the taste of food and the ambiance of the environment were major factors influencing their decision to buy again. On the other hand, an unattractive environment often discouraged them from returning. This study is essential for several reasons. First, it will provide insights into how sensory marketing can improve customer loyalty and retention in local cafés. Second, it will offer practical recommendations for café owners on how to optimize their sensory marketing strategies. Finally, it will contribute to the limited body of literature on sensory marketing within the Philippine context, particularly in small and local business settings.

The researchers aimed to measure the level of sensory marketing strategies in Tangub's café industry in terms of visual marketing (sight), auditory marketing (sound), olfactory marketing (smell), gustatory marketing (taste), and tactile marketing (touch). Meanwhile, the researchers also sought to determine which among these sensory strategies prevails most.

Statement of the Problem

The café industry has become increasingly competitive, with establishments seeking innovative ways to attract and retain customers. One emerging approach is the application of sensory marketing, which appeals to customers' senses of sight, touch, taste, smell, and sound to influence their experiences and perceptions. While many cafés in larger cities are integrating sensory marketing strategies, there is limited research on how such practices are applied in smaller urban areas such as Tangub City. This lack of empirical evidence creates a gap in understanding the extent to which local cafés adopt sensory marketing strategies and how these strategies contribute to their overall competitiveness. Addressing this gap is essential, as sensory experiences play a crucial role in shaping consumer behavior and satisfaction. Hence, this study sought to evaluate the level of sensory marketing strategy practices among café establishments in Tangub City and determine which sensory strategy prevails most in the industry.

Research Objectives

The general objective of this study is:

- To determine the level of sensory marketing strategy practices of café establishments in Tangub City.

The specific objectives of this study are:

1. To assess the level of sensory marketing strategy practices in terms of:
 - a. Visual marketing (sight)
 - b. Tactile marketing (touch)
 - c. Gustative marketing (taste)
 - d. Olfactory marketing (smell)
 - e. Auditory marketing (sound)
2. To identify which among the sensory marketing strategies prevails most among café establishments in Tangub City.

Research Questions

This study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the level of sensory marketing strategy practices of café establishments in Tangub City in terms of:
 - a. Visual marketing (sight)?
 - b. Tactile marketing (touch)?



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- c. Gustative marketing (taste)?
- d. Olfactory marketing (smell)?
- e. Auditory marketing (sound)?

2. Which among the sensory marketing strategies prevails most in the café establishments of Tangub City?

METHODS

Research Design

This study utilized a descriptive quantitative research design, which allows for an objective assessment of the current practices of sensory marketing among café establishments. Descriptive research is appropriate for examining the extent and nature of sensory marketing strategies as perceived by customers. By employing structured surveys, the researchers systematically gathered quantifiable data that reflect the respondents' perceptions and experiences. This design facilitated the analysis of the level of implementation for each sensory dimension—sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch—and enabled trends and patterns to be identified across various cafés. The primary goal was to provide a clear snapshot of how these strategies are currently being employed and how they impact customer satisfaction in the local context.

Population and Sampling

The population targeted in this study comprised customers of ten selected café establishments situated in Tangub City. These establishments were purposefully chosen to represent a cross-section of the local café industry. The respondents consisted of 336 customers who frequented these cafés during the school year 2022–2023. The sample size was determined using Slovin's formula at a 5% margin of error, ensuring representativeness. Purposive sampling was applied to include only customers with prior exposure to and experience with the cafés' sensory marketing strategies. The goal was to gather insights from those who are well-acquainted with the sensory environment of the cafés, ensuring the reliability and relevance of the responses. This sizeable respondent pool provided a comprehensive understanding of customer perceptions and experiences related to the sensory strategies employed.

Instrument

The researchers utilized the adapted-modified questionnaire from the study of Alsalihi (2021) entitled *"Exploring the Impact of Sensory Marketing on Consumer Purchase Intention Using Fuzzy Logic"*. The instrument, structured on a four-point Likert scale, measured five sensory marketing strategies: sight, touch, taste, smell, and sound. To ensure psychometric quality, the instrument underwent content validation by three experts in marketing and consumer behavior. A pilot test with 30 respondents from a non-sample café yielded a Cronbach's alpha of 0.89, indicating high internal consistency. Ensuring the reliability and validity of instruments is a crucial aspect of conducting robust quantitative research (Amihan et al., 2023; Bontuyan, 2025; Pangilinan, 2025; Sanchez, 2025).

Data Collection

The researchers administered the questionnaires directly to customers in the selected cafés during the designated school year 2022–2023. Data collection involved face-to-face distribution to ensure clarity and immediate assistance if respondents had questions. The researchers aimed to obtain honest and reflective responses about their sensory experiences. To ensure a high response rate, the questionnaires were carefully explained, and respondents were informed about the purpose and confidentiality of the study. The process was conducted with the utmost respect for respondents' time and privacy, emphasizing voluntary participation. The responses of a total of 336 customers provided a substantial basis for analyzing the overall sensory marketing practices within the local café industry.

Treatment of Data

The collected data were processed through descriptive statistical methods. The primary analytical tool was the calculation of mean scores for each sensory dimension. These means indicated the average level of agreement among respondents regarding the implementation and effectiveness of sensory marketing strategies. To qualify the gathered data, the arithmetic mean was used. The use of mean as a measure of central tendency is appropriate when the data are normally distributed or when the distribution is approximately normal (Field, 2013). This approach



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allowed the researchers to quantify the perceived prominence and success of each sensory strategy. The data analysis also involved comparing the means across different senses to identify which sensory strategy is most prevalent or impactful in the cafés.

Numerical Value	Hypothetical Range	Qualitative Description	Implications
4	3.26 - 4.50	Strongly Agree	Highly Practiced
3	2.51 – 3.25	Agree	Moderately Practiced
2	1.76 – 2.50	Disagree	Slightly Practiced
1	1.00-1.75	Strongly disagree	Not at all

Verbal Interpretation

- 4- The respondents strongly agree to the indicstors of the sensory marketing strategy practice which means the the factor is highly practiced.
- 3- The respondents agree to the indicators of the sensory marketing strategy practice which means that the fsctor is moderately practiced.
- 2- The respondents disagree to the indicators of the sensory marketing atrategy practice which means that the factor is slightly practiced.
- 1- The respondents strongly disagree to the indicators of the sensort marketing atrategy practice which means that the factor is not practiced at all.

Ethical Considerations

Participants were provided with informed consent forms outlining the purpose, voluntary nature of participation, and confidentiality of responses. They were assured of their right to decline or withdraw at any time without penalty. The study protocol was reviewed and approved by the College Research Ethics Committee, ensuring adherence to ethical research standards. Observing strict ethical practices is essential in maintaining trust, credibility, and integrity in research (Carvajal et al., 2025).

RESULTS and DISCUSSION

The results of the data analysis are presented in this chapter. The discussion follows in the order of the provided questions in the statement of the problem or in the objectives.

Table 1. Respondents’ Responses on the level of Sensory Marketing Strategy of the Cafe Establishment in terms of Visual Marketing (sight)

Indicators	Mean	Decription	Implication
1. The cafe inside is bright	3.92	Strongly Agree	Highly Practiced
2. The cafe inside is colorful	3.89	Strongly Agree	Highly Practiced
3. The cafe inside is interesting	3.85	Strongly Agree	Highly Practiced
4.The cafe inside is organized	3.88	Strongly Agree	Highly Practiced
5. The cafe inside is comfortable	3.89	Strongly Agree	Highly Practiced
6. The cafe inside is attractive	3.91	Strongly Agree	Highly Practiced
Grand Mean	3.89	Strongly Agree	Highly Practiced

Table 1 shows the respondents’ response on the level of Sensory Marketing Strategy of the Cafe Establishment in terms of sight. The table reveals that the respondents Respondents rated visual marketing very highly (M = 3.89).



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Brightness received the highest score ($M = 3.92$), indicating that lighting is a crucial visual cue for customers. This finding affirms Shilpa's (2021) claim that vision is the most dominant sense in consumer perception, as two-thirds of the body's sensory cells are in the eyes. Similarly, Szot (2018) emphasized that in cafés, visual cues such as design and color schemes significantly shape customer experiences.

The results are consistent with Rungta (2022), who found that visually pleasing environments encourage customers to share photos online, extending marketing reach through social media. This suggests that cafés in Tangub City effectively employ visual strategies to attract and engage customers.

Table 2. Respondents' Responses on the lvele of Sensory Marketing Strategy of the Café Establishment in terms of Tactile Marketing (touch)

Indicators	Mean	Description	Interpretation
1. I can touch the products	4.00	Strongly Agree	Highly Practiced
2. I feel more comfortable purchasing a product after physically examining it	3.94	Strongly Agree	Highly Practiced
3. It is important for me to touch all kinds of products	3.94	Strongly Agree	Highly Practiced
4. I am afraid to buy the product because I cannot touch it before I buy it	3.88	Strongly Agree	Highly Practiced
5. There are other products I would purchase only if I could handle them before purchasing	3.91	Strongly Agree	Highly Practiced
6. I feel more comfortable buying a product after touching it	3.89	Strongly Agree	Highly Practiced
Grand Mean	3.93	Agree	Moderately Practiced

The above-mentioned table reveals the respondents' response on the level of Sensory Marketing Strategy of the Cafe Establishment in terms of touch. As observed, Touch received the highest grand mean (3.93), making it the most prominent sensory strategy. Customers highly valued the opportunity to handle products before purchasing. Grove (2019) noted that allowing customers to physically engage with products fosters a sense of ownership, often triggering purchase decisions. This supports Shilpa's (2021) assertion that tactile cues are particularly significant for food and beverage businesses, where physical interaction enhances trust and comfort.

Table 3. Respondents' Reponses on the level of Sensory Marketing Strategy of the Café Establishment in terms of Gustative Marketing (taste)

Indicators	Mean	Description	Interpretation
1. The test products they offer taste good	3.95	Strongly Agree	Highly Practiced
2. I like their products' taste	3.94	Strongly Agree	Highly Practiced
3. The foods that they serve are fresh	3.94	Strongly Agree	Highly Practiced



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4.I feel comfortable to taste their products before purchasing it	3.94	Strongly Agree	Highly Practiced
5. I am afraid to buy the product because I cannot taste it before I buy it	2.91	Agree	Moderately Practiced
6. There are other products I would purchase only if I could taste them before purchasing	3.93	Strongly Agree	Highly Practiced
Grand Mean	3.77	Strongly Agree	Highly Practiced

Table 3 shows the respondents' response on the level of Sensory Marketing Strategy of the Cafe Establishment in terms of taste. The highest mean, 3.95 indicates that the respondents strongly agreed that the test products the cafe establishment offered taste good. The lowest mean 2.91 stated that the respondents are afraid to buy the product because they cannot taste it before they buy it. The grand mean, 3.77 implies that the respondents strongly agreed to the indicators of the sensory marketing strategy of the cafe establishment in terms of taste.

Nwachukwu (2022) stated that Gustative marketing or refers to as sense of taste marketing strategy is the most important strategy because as it attracts the consumers to the business and brands because we can't taste anything from a distance. Zhou (2020) supported that taste marketing enables the customers the choice of correct food, and when the customers are satisfied with the taste of the food they likely to buy again from the food establishment. Shilpa (2021) shared that customers enjoy food by the food establishments since eating facilitate social interaction between owners and staff.

Table 4. Respondents' Reponses on the level of Sensory Marketing Strategy of the Café Establishment in terms of Olfactory marketing (smell)

Indicators	Mean	Description	Interpretation
1. The smell of café is fresh	3.91	Strongly Agree	Highly Practiced
2. The cafe has a pleasant scent	3.93	Strongly Agree	Highly Practiced
3. I like the fragrance they use in this cafe	3.79	Strongly Agree	Highly Practiced
4. I can smell their fresh products	3.82	Strongly Agree	Highly Practiced
Grand Mean	3.87	Strongly Agree	Highly Practiced

Table 4 revealed the respondents' responses on the level of sensory marketing strategy of the cafe establishments in terms of smell. The table revealed that the respondents strongly agreed on all of the indicators. The highest mean, 3.93 indicates that the respondents strongly agreed that the cafe has a pleasant scent. Generally, the grand mean 3.87 implies that the respondents strongly agreed on the indicators of the sensory marketing strategy of the cafe establishment in terms of smell.

According to Bird (2022), olfactory marketing (smell) is a differentiating tool that can convey a message, a mood, or an emotion through a scent representative of the brand's universe or identity. It allows brands to create a physical, sensory, and lasting experience with their target audience. More so, Hammond (2021) shared that scent of foods connects with consumers on a deeper, emotional level to create a more memorable experience, and research suggests that being surrounded by a positive scent can elevate customers' mood by 40%. Shilpa (2021) supported that with the sense of smell, it is so sensitive and powerful so that many companies have joined the industry. About 75% of our emotions are generated by olfactory elements.



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Table 5. Respondents' Responses on the level of Sensory Marketing Strategy of the Café Establishment in terms of Auditory Marketing (sound)

Indicators	Mean	Description	Interpretation
1. The music being played in the café is enjoyable to me	3.79	Strongly Agree	Highly Practiced
2. The music played within the café holds significance for me	3.84	Strongly Agree	Highly Practiced
3. Having pleasant music sets a positive mood	3.82	Strongly Agree	Highly Practiced
4. Music is a significant aspect that impacts my overall dining experience	3.85	Strongly Agree	Highly Practiced
5. Loud music inside the café is not bothersome to me	3.88	Strongly Agree	Highly Practiced
6. I enjoy loud music inside the café as it contributes to a pleasant dining experience	3.87	Strongly Agree	Highly Practiced
Grand Mean	3.84	Strongly Agree	Highly Practiced

The table above reveals the respondents' response on the level of sensory marketing strategy of the cafe establishment in terms of sound. The table shows that the respondents strongly agreed to all of the indicators. The highest mean, 3.88 indicates that the respondents strongly agreed that loud music inside the cafe is not bothersome to them. The grand mean, 3.84 of sound implies that the respondents strongly agree on the indicators of the sensory marketing strategy of the cafe establishment in terms of sound.

In terms of auditory marketing, Gunelius (2018) said that it refers to the sounds associated with a brand. Those sounds could come from television or radio commercials, speeches, live events, recorded interviews, and so on. In other words, audible messages related to a brand are forms of auditory branding. In addition, Yang (2019) mentioned that sounds may capture customers' attention faster because when auditory nerves get provoked again and again, our smell, gustation and touch will addict us in it and give customers an imaginary world. Auditory marketing helps brands to build unique memory points of identity. Shilpa (2021) explained that more and more restaurants are keying in on the importance of music as a way enhances the customer experience and differentiate their brand from the competition.

Table 6. Summary of Level of Sensory Marketing Strategu Practices by Café Establishments in Tangub City

Indicators	Mean	Description	Interpretation
1. Sight	3.89	Strongly Agree	Highly Practiced
2. Touch	3.93	Strongly Agree	Highly Practiced
3. Taste	3.77	Strongly Agree	Highly Practiced
4. Smell	3.87	Strongly Agree	Highly Practiced
5. Sound	3.84	Strongly Agree	Highly Practiced

Table 6 presents the summary of level of sensory marketing strategies of the cafe establishment in terms of sight, touch, taste, smell, and sound. The results showed that, all five sensory strategies were rated highly practiced. Touch ($M = 3.93$) emerged as the strongest, while taste ($M = 3.77$) was the weakest. This difference may be due to limited opportunities for food sampling in cafés, reflecting a local marketing gap. Compared with Zhou (2020), who highlighted taste as the strongest determinant of repeat patronage, the present study shows a divergence, suggesting contextual variations in customer priorities within Tangub City cafés.



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Conclusions

The study revealed that café establishments in Tangub City actively utilize sensory marketing strategies, all of which were rated as highly practiced. Among the five senses, touch emerged as the most influential, highlighting customers' preference for physical engagement with products. Taste ranked lowest, suggesting limited opportunities for sampling despite its critical role in driving customer loyalty.

This study addressed the gap in local research on sensory marketing by providing empirical evidence of its effectiveness in the café industry. The findings reinforce the theoretical view that multi-sensory experiences enhance customer satisfaction and retention, while also showing that localized practices (e.g., limited sampling) influence the relative strength of each sense.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, for café managers, it is recommended to enhance taste marketing by offering free samples, seasonal menus, or taste-based promotions; strengthen olfactory cues through the consistent use of pleasant, brand-aligned scents; and curate music playlists that align with the café's ambiance and customer demographics. In the long term, managers should consider investing in interior design upgrades to sustain visual appeal, training staff to employ tactile engagement techniques such as product handling and sample serving, and integrating multi-sensory campaigns that combine sight, sound, and smell to reinforce brand recall. Policymakers and local tourism bodies can further support café businesses by providing marketing workshops on sensory branding and by promoting Tangub City cafés as part of the local tourism experience, highlighting their unique sensory features. Finally, future research may expand on this study by employing qualitative methods such as interviews and focus groups to capture deeper emotional responses, examining demographic differences (e.g., age, gender, income) in sensory perceptions, and conducting comparative studies across different cities to identify best practices in café sensory marketing.

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