

# Impact of Sensory Marketing on Purchase Intention: Mediated Role of Sensory Experience and Moderated Role of Switching Cost

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**Abstract.** In today market consumer behavior change rapidly, consumers are rationally take decision before but now consumer want to purchase that product in which they feel sensorial satisfaction. Experiential marketing gives unforgettable experience to customer rationally and emotionally in specific interest to get satisfying outcome. The point of this study is to discover the impact of sensory marketing on purchase intention of consumer with mediating role of sensory experience and moderating role of switching cost in fast food restaurants. The reason to choose fast food restaurants is only that the food corner is the only place where consumers senses mostly used and targeted. Data were collected through field survey 300 adopted questionnaires gathered and completed through randomly selected customer. Descriptive statistics, reliability analysis, correlation and regression analysis were used to test the hypothesis under preacher and Hayes assumptions. The findings suggest that SM have significant and positive effect on PI and mediating variable SE also have a significant and positive effect between SM and PI and the impact of SM on PI is moderated by SC variable that also have a positive and significant. The results show that SM is significantly associated with PI, mediating variable and moderating variable also have a positive and significantly associated.

**Key words:** Sensory Marketing, Sensory Experience, Switching Cost, Purchase Intention, Consumer Behavior, Fast Food Restaurants.

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## 1 Introduction

Sensory marketing's goal is to build powerful relation between product/service and its consumers by targeting/involving customer's senses (Khanna and Mishra, 2012). Krishna (2012) explains sensory marketing on the basis of visual difference between sensation and perception which is linked with consumer's consumption behavior and customer's attitude. In this perspective taste, smell, touch, visual and hearing senses play an vital role which enables a company to build a close relationship with consumer (Costa et al., 2012; Khanna and Mishra, 2012). Human senses strongly impact how human make pictures in mind and naturally process this sensory data to decide (Moreira et al., 2017).

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Sensory experience is the feelings of customer after sense any product by touching, smelling, tasting, hearing and viewing. [Hinestroza and James \(2014\)](#) find the considerable variation in consumer behavior after introducing visual sensory cues and olfactory sensory cues, such as interior and lighting for visual sense and attractive scent for olfactory sense, for the sake of retaining customer and spending more time in touching the products after that buying the products after touching them and increased sales. [Asioli et al. \(2014\)](#) conduct a qualitative study sensory experience and found that sensory experience at the point of sale is expected by the customers ([Krishna, 2011, 2012](#)). Switching cost is the cost that customer incurs while changing the product, brand or services. [Wong and Mula \(2009\)](#) states that customer satisfaction and customer retention is strongly affected by switching cost. In the other hand dissatisfaction or satisfaction is based on customer disloyalty. [Zhu and Mehta \(2017\)](#) finds that if company increase the level of customer satisfaction and switching cost is low it is more likely that customer purchase the product in future. [Morgan and Hunt \(1994\)](#) said that switching cost is economic nature. Switching cost both psychological and emotional. For example, when, with the passage of time social bond and trust have been built between customer and provider even performance is less than satisfaction but customers never switch it is psychological cost. The reason behind is the other provider may not be good he/she may be take more time to understand customer it is time taking task.

Our study is intended to make several contributions to the marketing literature. First, it addresses the new variables who can explain the said relationship more clearly ([Moreira et al., 2017](#)). Second, our study examines the relationship between sensory marketing and purchase intention with almost all direct and indirect effects as well as examines the strength of mediator and moderator in said relation.

Literature shows that the research on sensory experience and switching cost is potentially a novel thought in the context of Pakistan ([Moreira et al., 2017](#)). By testing these variables in one integrated model, it will help to recognize the individual and combined effect on purchase intention. This will add new aspect in existing knowledge. This study is significant because it helps to identify the factors that result in purchase intention and how to cope with it by using different mechanisms. This study will fill the research gap in existing literature of purchase intention. This study will be unique theoretically as well as contextually. The culture of Pakistan is different from other developed countries. In Pakistan, consumer feels and purchase differently due to social belongings. This study is significant for different organizations of Pakistan in order to find the factor that pursue consumer to buy.

**Representative theory of realism:** In this research the Representative Theory of Perception is uses as underpinning theory because according to theory and my model it is found that marketer attract consumer by sensory marketing than consumer sensory experience certain product after that consumer show his intention toward that product. This theory is align with this model because study focuses on consciousness and when we target the senses, these senses strongly affects the human consciousness in which result person start to like or dislike something.

## 2 Literature Review

[Krishna \(2012\)](#) defines sensory marketing as “marketing that engages the consumer’s senses and affect their behavior”. The time period of 1940 to 1960s is the post-depression or non-sense era in product term when consumer focuses only the product and price. Peoples purchase low price products and low price shops are popular. After that in 1970s branded products

become popular, firm focuses on branded products (Hussain, 2014). But the noticing point is in the past most of firms ignored the sensory aspects of products but now in new millennium companies actively focus on sensory aspects of product like magnum ice cream, blackberry. According to (Sparks et al., 2013) the relationship of senses is too much strange with the concept of synesthesia. Mostly consumers properly differentiate their five senses, but some of them are unable to differentiate their senses at that time more than one senses mingle together. Let's take a look of the role of all five senses in marketing:

Taste is the mother of all senses there are thousands of cells in humans mouth these cells transfer the information to the brain about the quality of food (Krishna, 2012). On the other hand sound also very important and related with taste Zampini et al. (2003), conduct a research and finds that the sound of biting the fries is important for the consumer because consumer takes it as freshness parameter. Krishna (2012) conducted a research and finds that haptic is also related to taste they said that the water in the disposable glass has better taste than flimsy disposable glass. The best way to target the taste sense is the experience; free sampling is the technique that mostly used for this purpose. Studies have analyzed that gustatory synesthesia play an amazing role in sensory aspects they conduct a research and finds that consumers remind the taste by words, not by taste.

According to Heller (1982), touch and texture perception have a great influence on sensory information. 70 years before Laird (1932) investigates that womens judgment of quality depends on the scent that is spread on the product. Most of the marketers know that sense of smell influence the consumer and play a great role in sale. Knasko (1992) study investigates that consumer spends more time in the shop where pleasant smell spread and increase bakery sale very much. Purchase intentions are 43% positively affected by smell. Mattila and Wirtz (2001) investigate that where scent and music matched consumer rate of satisfaction, shopping experience, impulse buying is high rather than that places where music and scent mismatched.

It is shown in last few years that researcher has a lot of interest in multisensory attributes of touch senses. When researcher talk about multi-sensory information the tactile sense is a most strong influencer (Heller, 1982). Touch sense is a basic tool of consumer behavior. Previous researchers focus on the hardness, temperature, texture, and weight which are the dimensions of touch sense. Researchers already analyzed that touch sense plays a vital role in purchasing behavior and also linked with smell sense, they argue that firstly consumer influence with smell than touch the product and after that consumer finally evaluate products quality and show his/her behavior toward the product (Krishna, 2012).

Past research on sound sense focuses on the universal effect Huang et al. (1969) and meaning of the effect Klink (2001) information regarding food comes to a consumer can develop the expectation to experience that and increase purchase intention. Lindstrom (2005) investigates that in restaurants consumer mostly evaluate products by the name of a menu or consumer sensory evaluate the product but the smell is also involved in that evaluation. Sparks et al. (2013) investigates that background music can affect consumers cognitive process and even consumer attracts by Music and spend more time there with maybe increase the purchase. According to Lindstrom (2005) visual sense is a most persuasive sense of consumers. Solomon (2010), argues that colors have some emotional and symbolic values from consumers like British consumers feel patriotism when they interact with Blue, White, and Red color. Authors further conclude that colors also arouse emotions; Green feels like cool and Red feels like danger. According to Kuesten (2011). sight sense play a vital role in evaluating product because when a customer interacts with the product by their visual sense the human brain send a photo to the brain on which customer take their decision to buy or not.

*H<sub>1</sub>: sensory marketing has a positively associated with the purchase intentions.*

**Sensory experience as a mediator:** Sensory experience is concerned that how consumer evaluate the physical attributes of product and how evaluate the product in sensory way (Kuesten, 1998). Epistemology argues that knowledge developed in human brain is the result when all five senses come in action/function. Sensory marketing works on 4 stages sensors, sensations, sensory expression and sensory experience (Lee et al., 2001). Firstly company develops sensors in market after that sensation born than marketer throw sensory expression which pursue customer to experience that a sensory experience only happen if sensory expression strong enough to pursue customer (Kuesten, 1998). The companies experience its customers to evoke their emotions and giving them a chance to check their product and evaluate by using their senses. Howarth (2016) describes the full process of how sensory marketing pursue consumer to experience them. Author said that firstly sensory marketing aim to get immediate response of customer's sensory organs such as (Eye, Nose, Tongue, ears and touch) to stimulus (interior, taste, smell, music and texture). Furthermore author argues "one can therefore gauge the importance of multisensory branding in creating a sensory experience, as one can see that all of the senses work together to create a coherent sensory experience."

Researchers also investigate that smell experience can effect consumer decision making process Mitchell et al. (1995), emotions and memory Krishna (2012) and mood (Warrenburg, 2005). Levav and Argo (2010); Sharma and Patterson (2000) studied the role of touch experience on human and finds that touch also play a vital role because by touch experience human nerves send a message to body and help in evaluation its just like a touch on shoulder feels security and comfort. Zhu and Mehta (2017) states that sensory experience mediates the relationship between sensory marketing and consumer behavior.

*H<sub>2</sub>: sensory experience mediates the relationship between sensory marketing and Purchase intention.*

## 2.1 Switching Cost

Today customers of 21<sup>st</sup> century more likely to switch the product/supplier (Zhu and Mehta, 2017). When customer switches from one product/supplier to another its called switching cost (Heide and Weiss, 1995). Simner and Ward (2006); Zhu and Mehta (2017) states that most of companies increases switching barriers to retain customer and make re-purchase possible, furthermore they argues that sometimes consumer is not satisfied with given product/services and want to switch the supplier but he/she will have to waste lot of time, money and effort to search new product/service according to their taste (Ding and Tseng, 2015).

According to Jackson and Bund (1985), switching cost is a cluster of psychological, economical and physical cost. In this thesis my main focus is on psychological cost. Psychological cost consist of social bonding and personal relations and satisfaction with specific brand, product, person or place (Hultén et al., 2009). Tsai et al. (2010) finds that switching cost moderates the relationship between customer satisfaction and loyalty, such as customer feel lot of psychological effort to terminate to new provider. Most of researchers find the switching cost in negative way that consumer feels a sense is stuck in current relation with restaurant because too much psychological costs linked with switching to new restaurant Han et al. (2009); Wansink et al. (2005), furthermore authors find the significant moderating effect of switching cost in restaurant industry. Chen and Chang (2008); Yorkston and Menon (2004) conduct a research on purchase intention and brand equity and find that switching cost highly affects the said relationship. Recent research provides the evidences that switching cost is the moderator between sensory marketing and purchase intention that need to be investigated by (Hee Park et al., 2014; Mattila

and Wirtz, 2001; Moreira et al., 2017; Sheehan, 1967).

*H<sub>3</sub>: switching cost moderates the relationship between sensory experience and purchase intention such that the relationship is weaker or stronger when switching cost is high or low.*

## 2.2 Theoretical Framework

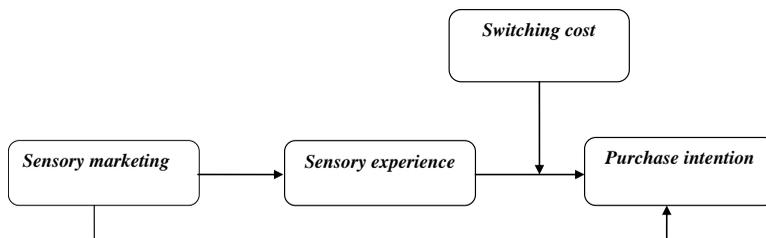


Figure 1: Theoretical Framework

## 3 Method

The current study intended to gather information on study variables from respondents via self-reported and administered questionnaires. The study is time lag survey in nature in which the impact of sensory marketing on purchase intention was investigated. Independent, dependent, moderating and mediating variables focused data were collected from the fast food restaurants of the twin cities of Pakistan (Rawalpindi and Islamabad). Whereas, almost all multinational and national fast food restaurants and included such as; KFC, McDonalds, Dominos, Pizza hut, Fri-chicks, Optp, Green valley, Hardees, Howday etc. The research design of this study incorporates the cross-sectional study, quantitative approach, population and sample. The study is cross-sectional in nature. Primary data on independent, dependent, mediating and moderating variables was collected from fast food restaurant's consumers. Research questionnaire was used for data collection, respondents were ensured that their data will be confidential and will not be giving to anybody. Respondent were asked to fill the questionnaire actively and attentively. Survey technique has been adopted in this study on the basis of it advantages. This procedure is also viable in those cases where targeted sample is large. In light of above stated facts, this study has incorporated survey data collection mechanism.

Finally it is very sensitive decision to choose appropriate sample from whole population. Data is collected from consumers of fast food restaurants in Rawalpindi/Islamabad. Total 400 fast food consumer/customers are contacted in all over the twin cities and asked for to fill the survey. Out of these 360 polls were gathered from the respondents. Out of 360 polls 60 were eliminate due to missing information or wrong input. The other 300 poll were considered for research. The majority of the researchers utilize a normal sample of 290 respondents to investigate the outcomes (Moreira et al., 2017). So 300 responses are appropriate sample size for analysis. For this present examination convenience sampling technique is utilized, which the type of non- probability sampling in which no probabilities are appended (Moreira et al., 2017). For this reason the sampling technique utilized as a part of present investigation was convenience

based. Primary data was collected through questionnaire. The section 1 of research questionnaire consist on demographics of respondents like age, sex and restaurants that customer mostly visits while the second part of the questionnaire focused on the views regarding sensory marketing as independent variable, purchase intention as dependent variable, sensory experience as mediator, and switching cost as moderator. Independent and dependent variable items in the questionnaire was responded using 5-point likert scale where 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) and mediator and moderator was responded 7-point likert scale where 1 (entirely disagree) to 7 (entirely agree), unless otherwise stated. The measures used in this study was borrowed from their original source and adopted. A starting paragraph was also included in the questionnaire in order to ensure secrecy to respondents and to describe the objective and purpose of the research.

Table 3.1: Measurement Instrumentation

Variable	Source	No. of Items
Sensory marketing	Nadiri, Gunay, 2013	8-items
Purchase intention	Bruhn, Schoenmueller, & Schäfer, (2012)	03-items
Sensory experience	Brakus, Schmitt, & Zarantonello, (2009)	03-items
Switching cost	Wong & Mula (2009)	05-items

## 4 Results Analysis

Table 4.1: Means, Standard Deviation

Variable	Mean	S.D.	1	2	3	4	5	6
Gender	1.40	.490	1					
Age	1.86	.722	-.068	1				
S.M	30.38	5.33	-.081	.021**	1			
S.E	14.4	3.47	-.012	.022	.472**	1		
S.C	22.8	6.15	.039	.334**	.342**	.198**	1	
PI	11.6	2.72	-.144	.243**	.585**	.343**	.483**	1

*Correlation Notes: \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$ . Control variable= Gender, Age, S.M= sensory marketing, S.E= sensory experience, SC= switching cost, PI= purchase intention N=310.*

The sample was assorted in term of sexual orientation as both male and female were the piece of test. Where 44.7% were female and 55.3% were male and result of gender shows that male respondents are more than female. Respondent of present examination have a place with various age gathering. For example 31.7% of participants were belong to 15-20 age, 51% participants were belong to 21-26 age, and 14.3% participants were belong to 36-30 and only 3.0%

respondents were between 31-35 age. The results of restaurants that customer visits commonly is that 26.3% people visit KFC, 18.7% McDonalds, 8.3% domino's pizza, 6.3% Optp, 6.0% fri-chicks, 5.7% Hardees, 5.3% Pizza hut, 4.3% Burger king and 3.0% people visits subway and howday. Alpha reliability value of sensory marketing is .74, purchase intention is .80, sensory experience is .71, and switching cost is .76.

The results show in Table 2 the correlation between SM, SE, SC and PI. The result of correlation indicates the positive and significant correlation between all variables in above table, which mean all variables have significant and positive relationship at the level of .01. Following table is the results of regression analysis are shown between independent and dependent variables in step the demographic variables are controlled and in step2 find out the impact of sensory marketing on purchase intention. Results in table 4.7 demonstrates that sensory marketing significantly influence customer PI ( $\beta = .281^{***}$ ),  $R^2$  value is .366 and  $\Delta R^2$  is .291<sup>\*\*\*</sup>. This shows that sensory marketing have .291% impact on purchase intention.

Table 4.2: Regression Analysis results

Predictor	purchase intention $\beta$	$R^2$	$\Delta R^2$
Step1 Control variables	.075		
Step2 Sensory marketing	.281**	.366*	.291**

Note: \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$

Table 4.3: Mediation Analysis (Direct and Indirect effect of mediation)

Direct Effect	SE	T	P
.2774	.0271	10.7352	.0000
Indirect effect			
Effect	Boot SE	Boot LLCI	Boot ULCI
.0206	.0155	.0081	.0521
Total Effect			
Effect	SE	t	p
.2980	.0240	12.4391	.0000

The above table shows the direct effect of independent variable that is sensory marketing and dependent variable that is purchase intention and direct effect between sensory marketing and purchase intention is .2774 and the p value shows the significance that is .0000. It means there is relation exists between sensory marketing and purchase intention with direct effect .2774. Mediation performed for this study was developed from Hayes procedural guidelines that provide both direct and indirect effect of research study. Direct impact of x on y was having an effect of .2774 and p value shows the significance that is .0000. While indirect effect was performed in presence of M which was declared as mediator of this research study was having an effect of .0206 with ultimate decline that throw a light for the presence of mediation in this research model.

Table 4.4: Results of moderation analysis

Moderation analysis	Switching Cost Predictor		
	$\beta$	R <sup>2</sup>	$\Delta R^2$
	<b>Step1</b>		
Control variable		0.075	
	<b>Step1</b>		
Sensory experience		188**	.113**
	<b>Step2</b>		
Sensory experience X switching cost	0.012	0.326	0.138

Notes: \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$

In above table Hypothesis 3 predicted that switching cost (SC) will strengthen the relationship between sensory experience (SE) and purchase intention (PI). To test the hypothesis I used moderated regression analysis controlled independent variable in first step (Purchase intention). I introduced interaction term  $S.E \times SC$  in second step. Slope coefficient's value is  $\beta = .012^{**}$  shows that a unit change in  $SE \times SC$  shall yield an .12% units change in purchase intention which imply that SC is increase the effect between SE and PI. The coefficient of determination  $R^2 (R^2 = .326)$  demonstrate that  $SE \times SC$  describe 32.6% variation in PI. While change in coefficient of determination ( $\Delta R^2 = .138^{**}$ ) describes that  $SE \times SC$  alone account for 13.8% variance in PI. Therefore  $H_3$  supported.

## 5 Discussion

The goal of this research was to examine the sensory marketing's impact on purchase intention. This study analyzes the mediating role of sensory experience and moderation role of switching cost on the relationship between sensory marketing and purchase intention. Results of the study indicate that all three hypotheses were accepted. Results of the correlation and regression analysis also show that sensory marketing is significantly and related to purchase intention. More specifically, results showed that the connection between sensory marketing (SM) and purchase intention (PI) as hypothesized in  $H_1$  is positive and significant which strengthens the results of (Moreira et al., 2017).

Results shows that the significant relationship between sensory experience and purchase intention. Howarth (2016) examines states that sensory experience mediate the relationship of sensory marketing significantly, even past research also argues that all five senses together cause sensory experience and lead consumer to purchase. Therefore results demonstrate that sensory experience (SE) partially mediates the sensory marketing (SM) and purchase intention (PI)'s relationship as claim in hypothesis  $H_2$  is positive and significant so,  $H_2$  is accepted. Results get from multiple regression analysis shows that switching cost (SC) is positively and significantly moderates the relationship between sensory experience (SE) and purchase intention (PI). More specifically, results demonstrates that switching cost (SC) moderate the sensory experience (SE)

and purchase intention PI) as claim in H<sub>3</sub>, is positive and significant which strengthens the results.

## 6 Conclusion and Future Direction

Results have revealed some light into which factors emphatically impact PI among shoppers, which isn't tremendously covered in literature within the Pakistan setting. Findings would help publicists and experts to characterize systems to redesign their SM and SE and PI remembering the true objective to get high ground and business sensibility, particularly among Pakistan buyer markets. The discoveries of this examination recommends that sensory marketing with mediating role of sensory experience leads the consumer to purchase but switching cost weak the relationship. Restaurant managers and marketing professionals have to consider this study and implement the results in their businesses to get more profit and enhance purchase intention. Marketers should perform well to take the advantage of the opportunities. The consequences of this research are not generalizable on every single other industry since this investigation is led just on fast food industry. It is prescribed that future investigations can similarly examine more than one industry like inns enterprises, mobile industry, garments industry, tourism industry. Future examinations can utilize different variable use as a mediator and as a moderator. As a moderator use utilize service quality, price impact, social norms and culture. In this investigation customer based SM was utilized as independent variable and shopper PI as dependent variable.

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