

Power of aroma marketing in branding: Design of available methodological approaches

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Abstract: Traditional marketing methods are for today's purposes and influence are in short supply on the market. The dynamics of changes in the market and the rapid growth of competition means: that on the one hand, there is big pressure on brand sustainability, on the other hand, this situation brings opportunities for implementing innovative approaches in the marketing strategies of the brand. One of the innovations is aroma marketing, one of the directions of sensory marketing. For the application of fragrance in branding, knowledge from a field called neuromarketing is used, which (using neuroscientific tools) provides results about consumer behavior, decision-making, and emotions. For this purpose, a systematic review of the existing literature was carried out, and then the potential of using aroma marketing in branding was described. The records obtained allowed an in-depth insight into how the application of fragrance can contribute to understanding consumers' emotional and decision-making responses to strengthen the brand's marketing strategy.

Keywords: aroma marketing, branding, consumers, neuromarketing, sensory marketing

JEL Classification: M31, O36, Z31

1 Introduction

Today's competition in the business world is huge (Mohsen & Mostafa, 2020), and company marketers therefore they must employ several strategies to acquire and retain their customers. (Nyoni & Buga, 2017) One such strategy is the use of modern tools that the field of marketing offers. Increasing competitiveness is not the only advantage, the approach can be targeted to support stronger ties between the customer and the brand, which subsequently affects, in a positive direction, the customer's trust and value towards the brand. (Gill & Singh, 2022) Nilashi et al. (2020) indicate another positive aspect of the adoption of new trends in marketing companies' strategies, thereby supporting sustainable business. One such trend emphasizes understanding consumer emotions and their subconscious reactions to analyze consumer choice and decision-making processes on a comprehensive scale. (Fortunato et al., 2014) Answers to the most important marketing question can thus be obtained: "What motivates consumers to put a given brand ahead of others?" (Fisher & Klitzman, 2010) Traditional marketing tools (for example, questionnaire surveys, interviews, surveys, self-reports) it only measures the reactions and behavior of consumers at the level of consciousness, so the subconscious component is in the traditional marketing concept completely overlooked. (Duque-Hurtado et al., 2020) However, the available study states that most purchasing decisions are made by consumers subconsciously. According to his research. (Glova & Mudryk, 2020; Nyoni & Bonga, 2017) indicate that the subconscious mind makes up to 95% of purchasing decisions. From this point of view, they are traditional marketing methods challenged. Based on the need to obtain sufficient and accurate data about consumer behavior, a science called "neuromarketing". (Morisson et al., 2011)

With the first scientific studies, a considerable difference was observed between the expected behavior (observed on a conscious level) and actual consumer behavior (observed on a subconscious level). Putting neuromarketing into practice has (according to existing literature and research) a direct impact on marketing success. (Mileti, Guido & Prete, 2016) Marketing (itself) is very expensive, and due to the inability to express how the consumers feel and think about a given marketing stimulus. Traditional marketing tools are ineffective. Conversely, neuromarketing and neuroscience tools are an advantage in this regard, they can offset costs, add value to marketing plans, and bring about better (more efficient) results. (Jordao et al., 2017) Moreover, it is an innovative way to build awareness of brands using methods that focus on human feelings. Also, the senses are an important part of neuromarketing, it is called "sensory marketing". (Spence, 2020)

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Measured processes and their interpretation emotional tendencies of customers (toward the brand) can ensure the success of the brand in the long term. Marques Martinez (2021) adds that sensory marketing increases the emotional connection, thus increasing consumer trust and value towards the product or brand. As a result, it can be stated that the implementation of neuromarketing or specifically sensory marketing (into company's strategy) can positively change consumer buying habits and preferences. (Rosenlacher & Tichý, 2020)

1.2 Sensory marketing in branding

Every day, the consumer is exposed to various sensory triggers that subconsciously stimulate a influence the buying behavior of consumers. These sensory triggers cause consumers to create (desired) brand attributes, on the contrary, this cannot be provided verbally. Understanding the sensory senses in connection with marketing, to provide specific areas: "aroma marketing", (Berčík et al., 2021) "flavor marketing" (Liang et al., 2016), "audio marketing" (Malenkaya & Andreyeva, 2016), "visual marketing" (Zhang et al., 2020), and "haptic marketing" (Rodriguez et al., 2017). Each of these focuses provides a greater understanding of consumer perception that determines their purchasing behavior. (Jang & Lee, 2019) Besides this, sensory marketing offers other advantages of its application - Kalenskaya (2019) refers to sensory marketing as a low-cost sales promotion tool that is also very effective in increasing profits. Simha (2020) describes sensory marketing as a promising direction for further future research. In general, the most used sense for marketing purposes is sight. However, there is so much visual information that consumers are oversaturated with them. Sample et al. (2020) this fact the formulate, so-called "visual smog", therefore it is advisable to choose a different form of sensory strategy. Berčík et al. (2021) recommend using the sense of smell.

1.3 Aroma marketing in branding

The advantage of smell is that it is the most connected to the emotional reactions of all the senses, so it can quickly captivate and instantly evoke strong memories. The reason is the connection with the limbic system, where emotions and memories (with long-term memory function) are stored. (Berčík et al., 2021) The uniqueness of the sense of smell also lies in the fact that a person can perceive and subsequently identify over 10,000 scents (fragrances) and assign a specific memory or emotion to each of them (including about a brand or product). (Howard Hughes Medical Institute, 2014) In his study, Krishna (2012) proves that it is through the use of scent that one can effectively create a consumer's desire for a brand or product in the mind. The chapter is then about what fragrance should be used for the brand at the point of sale. Erajaa et al (2021) claim that if we want to "fix" the consumer shopping (the positive) experience into (long-term) memory, it is appropriate to use a scent that is identical whit the brand. (De Luca & Botelho, 2021; Rathee & Rajain, 2018) However, some studies reveal specific market sectors that, on the contrary, they ask for incongruity, i.e. incongruity, not concerning the brand, product, or place, but gender.

However, they point out that the use of aroma marketing as a modern marketing strategy and investigating the effect of olfactory stimuli (smell) is not a simple matter. In addition, aroma marketing is based

on technology, which is built on the psychology of scents, of the influence of single-component scents or scent mixtures on human behavior. Therefore, there is a strong relationship between neuromarketing, aroma marketing, and aromachology. (Girona-Ruiz et al., 2021) Following this fact, the emotional states of consumers become an important subject of more detailed investigation. (Guillet et al., 2019)

The design of the resulting fragrance is a (especially time-consuming) process. However, the positive effect is more than enough to start implementing scents into corporate strategies (mainly in the retail sector). (Rathee & Rajain, 2021) Berčík et al. (2021) highlight retail, as an environment where aroma marketing is a very appropriate part of the branding strategy. Roy & Singh (2023) add that the application of a scent that is rated "pleasant" increases retail brand awareness (i.e. brands that are not very well known). Other studies from the retail environment demonstrate the ability of the fragrance to significantly improve consumer perception of product evaluations, (Krishna et al. 2016) to increase consumer returns while acting on increasing the time spent in the sales environment, (Spence, 2015) to increase the brand image perceived by customers, (Krishna et al., 2012) increase consumer satisfaction, (Bui & Nguyen, 2021) increase the number of new customers and strengthen the loyalty of regular customers. (Ruzeviciute et al., 2020). Berčík et al. (2021) and Bočková (2021) mention another added value.

1.4 Neuroscience tools and aroma marketing in branding

On the one hand, aroma marketing is a young field, on the other hand, the technical progress in the form of neuroscientific tools is very advanced. Several tools and techniques are used to study consumer behavior, noteworthy the most commonly used in research: electroencephalography (EEG); functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI); electrocardiograph (ECG); Eye Tracking; and FaceReader.

Berčík et al. (2021) investigated the effect of selected fragrances on increasing the sales of a specific product for a brand in the hospitality sector. Innovative approaches used neuroscientific EEG FaeReader tools (in both laboratory and real conditions) for the selection of a suitable aromatic substance. Based on the results, it was found that the scent matching the product increases its sales, which in turn strengthens the brand as such. A similar claim is made by a study by Harwood & Jones (2013), the results of the study show that a scent identical to the brand's product attracts the visual attention of consumers, which leads to an increase in product sales, and again the positive effects on the brand as a complex are confirmed. The use of the neural tool fMRI provides positive effects on a better perception of product quality by consumers. (Mensing, 2023). ECG, it has been shown that using scent results in greater memorability and brand recall (after a longer time interval) of a brand. (Coz et al., 2022)

2 Literature review methods

Based on the above literature review, the use of aroma marketing with the application of neuroscience tools in the field of branding has been extensively researched and there are still research gaps. The following is an overview of several possible methodological approaches to understanding emotional consumer processes - their behavior and decision-making towards the brand using the aroma marketing application using neuro-marketing tools. It is possible to look at the given topic from several points of view:

1. *From a brand point of view – brand image, brand awareness, sales promotion*
2. *From a retail store point of view – quality, and pleasant perception, provide a sensory (unique) experience*
3. *From a consumer point of view – increasing the length of stay in the retail environment, repeat purchase intention, satisfaction, consumer loyalty*
4. *From an employee point of view – satisfaction, motivation, efficiency*

3 Existing research

In 2014, Holtmann & Vollmers examined fragrance incongruence and congruence about the brand on consumer satisfaction. Using a modified S-O-R (Stimuli – Organism – Response) model, they arrived at the result that the match the fragrance with the brand leads to greater consumer satisfaction. At the end of the article, the research team adds that simply connecting the fragrance with the brand is not enough, a very important factor (to increase consumer satisfaction) is the type of fragrance chosen. Erraja et al. (2021) also examined the incongruence (control) and congruence (test) of a scent with a brand image. Using a factorial design, it was again found that the congruence of the fragrance with the brand image has a positive effect on consumer reactions and thus leads to higher consumer satisfaction, higher intention to revisit the point of sale, and higher consumer intention to buy again. As in the previous article, this research also highlights the fact that simply using a pleasant congruent scent (with different brand factors) is not enough, on the contrary – it must be complex and consistent to have a positive effect on the brand image.

Hashim & Jebur (2023) investigated the relationship between aroma marketing and consumer brand awareness. Using a questionnaire survey, the positive impact of the use of fragrance on increased brand awareness, brand recognition among other (competing) brands, and brand recall was determined. As this issue is found both at the level of emotions and at the level of knowledge, other elements supporting this process (awareness - recognition - remembering) - repurchase intention and consumer loyalty to the brand - were revealed.

Rodas-Areiza & Montoya-Restrepo (2018) focused their research on the influence and subsequent discussion of the correct setting to attract consumers and prolong their stay in the retail environment on the one hand, and at the same time to create a pleasant working environment for retail employees. Using FaceReader, the intensity of the scent was investigated, but to attract consumers, a really strong intensity of the scent is needed, for employees, the pleasantness of the intensity is even slightly lower due to a longer working stay in a small amount of shops. Moreover, the paper's conclusions state that the effects of attraction do not directly demonstrate sales promotion, but may be a side effect of creating a pleasant environment that provides exciting sensory experiences. On the contrary, Berčík et. al. (2020) wanted to prove with their research that the application of fragrance can support (increase) sales. They used the neuroscientific tool FaceReader to collect data – the unconscious level, but they also focused on the conscious level, and the collection of this data took place using a questionnaire survey. Concerning previous studies, the research team accepted the importance of choosing a suitable scent for the brand concept (image) and devoted the first part of the experiment to

choosing a suitable scent, the second part of the research focused on the set research objectives. Results demonstrate increased profitability, as well as customer attraction and retention.

4 Conclusions

In this paper, we discussed possible methodological approaches to neuromarketing (aroma marketing) research using appropriate neuroscientific tools. First, we conducted a systematic review of the existing literature focusing on aroma marketing and its influence on the brand and the branding process. Several possible approaches from different areas related to the topic of linking fragrance and brand (branding) and the neuromarketing tool – FaceReader, were proposed, with a subsequent confrontation with the existing scientific literature. The goal of future research will be to try to follow up these proposals of possible methods with empirical research.

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