

Developing a multi-sensory marketing conceptual model for superior customer retail shopping mall experience in South Africa

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Abstract

The growth in retail malls in South Africa is prompting mall retailers to look for unique strategies to stand prominently conspicuous against competitors. In that quest, multi-sensory marketing becomes instrumental in differentiating malls in a way that augments customer experience. Thus, this paper aims to develop a multi-sensory marketing conceptual model for superior customer experience at South African retail shopping malls. The study employed a systematic literature review on multi-sensory marketing cues and superior customer experience using scholarly textbooks, journal papers, and online resources. As many research variables as possible were sourced to develop the hypothesised model, data from developed and developing nations were sourced. The five multi-sensory marketing cues identified were auditory, scent, taste, atmospheric, and visual. The dependent variable is customer experience. The model's capacity to evaluate the interaction among the five sensory cues adds to its uniqueness. The comprehensive proposed hypothesised model could be tested in any developing country, while the variables within each factor can be used as a checklist to meet multi-sensory marketing requirements. The research could be repeated to establish which and how senses changed over time and how malls can adapt to remain competitive.

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1. Introduction

1.1. Background

The retail industry in South Africa (SA) accounts for over R900 billion in annual sales revenue, or an equivalent of 15% of the country's Gross Domestic Product (Masebe, *et al.*, 2020:239). The country has experienced exponential growth in retail developments concerning the establishment of new malls, each equipped with unique features meant to differentiate itself from others in terms of the wide variety of customer experiences offered (Nair, 2017:330). Mall retailing in SA is a multibillion-rand business, with some recently built malls such as The Mall of Africa receiving as many as 13.7 million visitors in only 11 months of establishment (South African Council of Shopping Centres (SACSC, 2023:1). On average, major retail shopping malls attract an average turnover of R4.5 billion per annum and a mean monthly turnover of R330 million during the festive seasons and Black Friday months, turnover shoots to more than R500 million per month (SACSC, 2023:1). The average monthly trading density of malls in SA of R2400/m² was observed with a mall such as the Mall of Africa surpassed this threshold and recorded R2500/m² (SACSC, 2023:1).

Customers enjoy the mall shopping experience, and the average amount spent per mall visit was R250 in 2021 (Ligthelm, 2022:38). The retail industry provides a convergence zone where customers from different social and economic backgrounds can meet with the ubiquitous intention of acquiring various goods, services or activities (Mason, Dobbelstein & Corbishley, 2019:63). Furthermore, this provides an opportunity for the enhancement of customer experience through the provision of a diversity of services and activities that appeal to the varied human senses. The development of the retail industry revolves around creating customer experience and the industry's ability to offer a variety of goods and services that exceed the expectations of customers, particularly from a multi-sensory marketing perspective (Zanini *et al.*, 2019:141). Customer experience is defined as "a collection of the customer's cognitive, emotional, social, physical and sensory reactions to an organisation, its services and its brands" (Barbu, *et al.*, 2021:1417).

Customer experience is essential in the retail industry since customer experience is the basis upon which product and service offerings can be differentiated (Eklund & Helmfalk, 2018:500). The customer experience appeal of malls in SA is related to factors that include architectural designs, variety of activities, entertainment facilities, size, location, gatherings, fashion involvements, economic value and an aesthetically pleasing atmosphere (Kumar & Kashyap, 2021:19). The appeal of retail shopping malls with regards to demand creation is largely based on their ability to offer a variety of goods and services that exceed the expectations of customers, particularly from the multi-sensory marketing perspective (Zanini *et al.*, 2019:141).

1.2. Problem Statement

The COVID-19 era led to online shopping made possible by developments in the digital revolution which influenced customer shopping experiences (Ameen *et al.*, 2020:325). This trend threatened to disintermediate retail shopping malls since an increased number and value of transactions were being settled online. However, the failure of the virtual environment to create exceptional customer touch-and-feel shopping experiences appears to reinvigorate the conceptual appeal of retail shopping malls (Degen, Melhuish & Rose, 2017:6). Shopping mall retailers are eager to leverage customer experience as a key differentiator for competitive advantage (Atulkar, 2020:559). There is, however, scant research on retail shopping mall-induced sensations in terms of customer experience (Stead *et al.*, 2022:442).

Shopping mall retailers are conscious that customer experience is cardinal to the sustainability of the mall industry (Cinderby & Bagwell, 2018:127). At the same time, customers emphasise experiential effects in assessing retail shopping malls concerning the variety of activities and services on offer (Juwaheer, Pudaruth & Ramdin, 2023:179). Unfortunately, although a significant number of retail shopping malls leverage attractiveness as an essential tool to attract customers, they fail to fully capitalise on the customer experience opportunities that are provided by multi-sensory marketing cues (Kumar & Kashyap, 2021:20). This is despite the realisation that multi-sensory marketing has a ubiquitous application at different levels in the retail industry's service offering (Fong *et al.*, 2022:2). However, there is no comprehensive research framework about the five facets of multi-sensory marketing cues as determinants of customer experience within the context of the South African retail mall industry, despite the exponential development of retail shopping malls in the country. The problem statement of the study is then formulated as follows: *Which multi-sensory marketing cues must be considered to enable a superior customer experience in retail malls in SA?*

1.3. Research objectives

The primary objective of this study is to develop a multi-sensory marketing conceptual model for a superior customer experience at South African retail shopping malls. To substantiate the primary objective of the study, the following secondary objectives have been developed:

- To identify the multi-sensory marketing cues that may affect customer experience at South African retail shopping malls;
- To identify how each of the five multi-sensory marketing cues can be tested;
- To determine how retail mall customer experience in South Africa can be tested; and
- To suggest a proposed multi-sensory marketing conceptual model for a superior customer experience in South African retail shopping.

This paper is presented in sections and subsections. The next section presents a literature review, where multisensory marketing and superior customer experience variables are discussed at length. Section three discusses the methodology employed in this study, while results and findings are discussed in section four. The last sections of the paper discuss managerial implications, conclusions, limitations, and areas for future research.

2. Literature Review

An overview is provided of the concepts of multi-sensory marketing and customer experience followed by a discussion of the models of sensory marketing or branding in developing countries and developed countries.

2.1. Multi-sensory marketing

The multi-sensory marketing is based on the idea that incorporating sensory elements into marketing campaigns can enhance the overall consumer experience, capture attention, and create lasting impressions (Abdolmohamad *et al.*, 2022:23). As a result of its holistic sensory approach, multi-sensory marketing appeals to consumers' senses beyond traditional visual and auditory stimuli, such as using tactile elements, scents, and flavours to create a more impactful and engaging marketing message (Chen *et al.*, 2021:4). The key premise behind multi-sensory marketing is experiential logic based on leveraging the five senses to appeal to customer cognitions as a way of differentiating a retail offering from competitors (Morrin & Tepper: 2021:204). Wiedmann *et al.* (2021:1) thus note that multi-sensory marketing engages the human being's five senses. It is the marketing techniques that aim to seduce the consumer by using his senses to influence his feelings and behaviour (Wiedmann *et al.*, 2021:1). The five human senses that are triggered in multi-sensory marketing are sight, smell, sound, taste, and touch (Abdolmohamad *et al.*, 2022:23).

Multi-sensory marketing cues include visual cues such as colours, shapes, sound and imagery cues such as music, sound effects, and voiceovers in commercials and in-store environments (Helme Falk & Berndt, 2018:1078; Lick, 2022:253). Doucé and Janssens (2013:215) also add fragrance and scent marketing cues in retail spaces, events, products, and tactile cues like texture, haptic feedback, and interactive displays. The fifth marketing cue was identified by Campo, Rosato and Battisti (2022:3275) as taste in marketing campaigns and events. By combining these five sensory marketing cues (visual, sound, scent, tactile, and taste), marketers can create a more holistic and engaging brand experience that resonates more deeply with consumers.

Multi-sensory marketing evokes different emotions in customers. While there is existing research on the human senses in the field of natural science, there is a need to consider how multi-sensory interactions can affect consumers' consumption behaviour (Morrin & Tepper, 2021:205). According

to Abdolmohamad *et al.* (2022:23), the senses are the faculties of sight, smell, hearing, taste, and touch through which human and animal perception of stimuli emanates from outside the body. Sensory marketing is thus an efficient means to ameliorate marketing offers, as the senses are mastered through visual, auditory, gustative, and tactical marketing (Morrin & Tepper: 2021:205).

Through multi-sensory marketing, a sensory branding effect thus emerges in all the human senses (sight, sound, touch, taste, and smell) are used to create a brand experience that is memorable and engaging for consumers (Campo, Rosato & Battisti, 2022:3275). Further, multi-sensory marketing goes beyond traditional advertising strategies to create immersive brand experiences that allow consumers to interact with products or services in a multi-sensory way (Campo, Rosato & Battisti, 2022:3275).

2.2. Superior customer experience

Customer experience is the assortment of the customer's cognitive, emotional, social, physical, and sensory responses to a business, its services, and its brands (Barbu *et al.*, 2021:1417). A superior customer experience is thus a multidimensional construct that consists of elements such as physical, cognitive, social, and sensorial that influence the customer journey (Mahr, Stead & Odekerken-Schröder, 2019:88). The focus of superior customer experience is direct or indirect experiences that create utilitarian and pleasurable values (Mele, Russo-Spena, Tregua & Amitrano, 2021:421). Pleasurable values involve humour and elegance, whereas utilitarian values are mostly task-driven and pragmatic (Becker, Jaakkola & Halinen, 2020:769).

Customer experience usually portrays the customer journey as a series of touchpoints that customers interact with during their purchase process, which incorporate activities that customers go through to discover, acquire, and engage with a store's offerings (Agarwal & Mohan, 2021:106). The customer experiential value creation process enhances customer pleasure and relationship building throughout the product acquisition and disposal stages (Becker *et al.*, 2020:769).

The customer experience journey involves physical and virtual environments with numerous phases, connections, touchpoints, and channels (Mele *et al.*, 2021:421). In essence, the customer experience journey incorporates customer interactions with retailers in the pre-purchase, purchase, and post-purchase stages (Barbu *et al.*, 2021:1418). Hence, the customer journey is a crucial part of customer experience as it appeals to numerous senses simultaneously to improve customer value creation and, consequently, ignite favourable customer reactions that permit retailers to map the customer decision-making processes that can promote customer perceptions and value (Hodgkinson, Jackson & West, 2022:108).

The following sections provide a discussion on multi-sensory marketing cue factors and the important variables to consider for each of the five sensory marketing cues. An overview of conceptual models tested in developing countries is followed by tested conceptual models in developed countries on

multi-sensory marketing cues. It must be noted that as not many studies related to multi-sensory marketing, sensory branding cues are also included in the discussion. However, it must be noted that as sensory marketing is often driving sensory branding this should not pose a problem. This contributed to the value of this study as the conceptual model may then be available for testing sensory branding marketing as well. This is followed by a discussion on customer experience models in developing and developed countries. It must be noted that there are not many studies that relate to customer experience, so branding experience models are also included in the discussion.

3. Research Methodology

Data for the study was gathered using a qualitative desk research approach, specifically a systematic literature review, to develop a multi-sensory marketing model for superior customer experience in SA's shopping malls. Tracy (2019:25) defines a qualitative desk research approach as a secondary analysis of extant empirical evidence to address a current problem. In developing a conceptual model, Jesson, Matheson and Lacy (2011:10) use secondary data through desk research because that would assist in substantiating variables, thereby building upon previous scholarly contributions. Tracy (2019:128) defines desk research as systematically collecting and analysing extant empirical data and published work. Data for desk research is obtainable from various sources such as the internet, internal records, journal articles, government departments, and online and offline libraries. The study thus performed a systematic review of the literature and followed the procedure prescribed by Bhatia *et al.* (2021:3) namely, defining research objectives, keyword selection, establishing a credible repository and data source, data collection, screening of data, presentation and discussion of findings, and discussion of implications and limitations.

Systematic reviews provide summaries of any study topic by indicating influential authors, countries where studies were conducted, the methodology used, and the specific areas of interest (Bhukya, Paul & Robinson 2021). The screening of the articles was not based on several citations but instead on what more recent research was available because consumer behaviour is fast changing, and the consumer experience behaviour before the last decade may be different from before 2014. Recent changes in consumer behaviour and sensory stimuli are mainly driven by technological changes, the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, and improvements in infrastructure (Makudza *et al.*, 2024:2). The scope and parameters of the systematic data search in this study were thus limited to publications from 2014 to 2024. Google Scholar was presumed to be a credible data source as all journal articles considered in this study were obtained from Google Scholar. Currie, Devlin, Emde and Graves (2010:114) confirmed that Google Scholar is a credible source of academic output.

Keywords used to search for articles include multi-sensory, sensory, atmospheric and experiential marketing, sensory branding, cues, and indicators, customers, shoppers, buyers, brand, and

atmospheric experience. Contextually, global articles were considered but were grouped during analysis based on their geographical scope. To create a thorough proposed conceptual model for testing, generic factors and variables were considered for inclusion irrespective of whether they were found in a developed or developing nation context to enable the development of a more comprehensive proposed conceptual model for testing.

The data was thoroughly examined and compared to identify trends and differences in the perspectives of researchers about how to quantify multi-sensory marketing cues and the customer experience to minimize the possibility of bias. Data coding was used, categorising the articles according to the context and particular sensory marketing cue. As a result, a multi-theory strategy was adopted to eliminate possible shortcomings of one theory with the other as suggested by Awa, Ukoha and Emecheta (2012:574). This methodology facilitated the generation of many research variables to view it through a holistic theoretical lens and yield a more comprehensive framework.

To increase credibility, eliminate bias and facilitate the creation of a general conceptual model, extant literature was carefully examined for inclusion by considering the sample respondents and the nations in which the research was conducted and the methodology followed. This enabled the same results and reliability despite changes in the study environment. Data reporting was presented in four tables: multi-sensory marketing cues from developed countries, multi-sensory marketing cues from developing countries, and customer experience measurement from developed and developing countries. This resulted in compiling a more comprehensive proposed conceptual model for testing.

4. Results and Findings

An overview of the sourced studies for sensory marketing cues and customer service expectations is presented.

4.1 Sensory marketing cues studies

Several studies have been conducted on sensory marketing cues and their link to customer experience. However, many studies focused just on one sensory marketing cue. Some of the most recent sensory studies include:

- Touch cues marketing (Erenkol & Merve 2015; Ifeanyichukwu & Peter 2018, Hutmacher 2019; Pantoja, Borges, Rossi & Yamim 2020; Ringler *et al.*, 2019);
- Sound cues marketing (Melzner & Raghubir 2023; Poushneh 2021; Scott, Sheinin & Labrecque 2022);
- Scent cue marketing (Latina, Sordan & Calamba 2022; De Luca & Botelho 2021; Van Niekerk & Goldberg 2021; Spence 2021);
- Taste cues marketing (Konuk 2021; Khan & Lee 2020; Krishna & Elder 2021);

- Visual cues marketing (Larocca, Ladeira & Silva 2020; Bashirzadeh, Mai & Faure 2022).

Table 1 presents an overview of what was regarded as the more comprehensive multi-sensory marketing cues models tested in developing nations. One of the six studies was not a model but merely a framework. Table 1 summarises the studies by indicating the model developers, the country of data sourcing, the data analysis technique employed, and multi-sensory marketing cues investigated for testing regardless of whether statistically significant relationships were found. Both the factors and the variables developed were indicated.

Table 1: Summary of multi-sensory marketing cue models for developing countries

Cues	Variables tested	Country - Context Model developer(s) Data analysis method
Sight	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brightness • Colourfulness • Liveliness • Cheerfulness 	South Africa - Coffee shops Anvar (2016) Structured Equation Modelling
Touch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single product touch • Multi-product touch • Fun touch • Product handling • Product touch comparisons 	
Taste	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taste buds • General likeness of taste • Taste enjoyment 	
Smell	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pleasant scent • Intense scent • Aroma • Familiar scent 	
Sound	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pleasant music • Loudness of instore music • Familiar music • Music aligned to purchase environment • Music aligned with personal taste 	
Olfactory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lobby fragrance • Restaurant fragrance 	
Auditory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Background music • Music 	
Visual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visual identity designs • Decoration style 	
Tactile	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Linen tactility • Tableware tactility 	
Gustative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Special foods • Special beverages 	
Olfactory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hedonic scent 	China - Culture related

Cues	Variables tested	Country - Context Model developer(s) Data analysis method
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emotional scent • Memorable scent • Ambient scent 	Vinnikova (2016) Structured equation modelling
Sight	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Colours and forms • Layout of a point of sale • Realisation of promotion campaign • Aesthetic visuals 	Ghana - Restaurants Isaac, Keelson, & Yiadom (2023) Structured Equation Modelling
Smell	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food aroma in atmosphere • Artificial smells 	
Sound	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jingles • Voice • Music 	
Taste	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bitter • Sour • Savoury • Salty • Sweet 	
Touch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human contact e.g. firm handshake • Product weight • Product softness 	
Auditory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality of background music 	
Scents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ambience • Air quality • Quality ventilation 	Zimbabwe - Banking Makudza (2021) Multiple Regression Analysis
Atmospherics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical equipment • Physical architecture • Parking lot assets 	
Visual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Colour • Posters display • Building architecture • Physical layout • Lighting • Window displays • Digital signage • Exhibitions • Attractive employees 	China - Shopping malls Zha <i>et al.</i> (2022) Secondary data analysis
Auditory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Music • Tone of employee's voice • Background noise 	
Olfactory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aroma of food • Aroma of freshness • Perfumed scenting 	
Tactile	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Texture • Temperature 	

Cues	Variables tested	Country - Context Model developer(s) Data analysis method
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Material 	
Taste	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free food samples • Local dishes • Popular beverages trending on social media 	

Source: Own compilation

The studies in Table 1 ranged from 2016 to 2023, covering the food, banking and hotel industries, with only one study specific to shopping malls. Four of the six studies used SEM analysis. These studies were conducted in China, South Africa, and Ghana. The Zimbabwean study used MRA, and one study from China is merely a framework, not a model using the Secondary Data Analysis approach. All studies indicated multi-sensory marketing cues, but the actual number of cues that each study tested varied from one to six cues. How the marketing cues were tested differs from which cues were considered important for the type of business offering. The study conducted in China by Vinnikova (2016) tested one sensory marketing cue namely olfactory sensory cues which is not covered much in other studies. Four studies from SA, Ghana and China took a holistic approach and examined all five multi-sensory human cues.

The studies in Table 1 also show the diversity in how sensory marketing cues can be tested, as the measurement items for each cue vary but can be put into the context of the industry surveyed. Many studies have a retail focus specifically on the food and beverage industry. One of the studies conducted in China focuses on culture-specific scents only. The other study in China was on sensory marketing of shopping malls. Visual marketing cues include the roles of colour, emotional mood sensations, and physical design aesthetics. Studies conducted in China and SA tested similar visual marketing cues. Tactile cues covered the role of human interaction, décor feel and product handling aspects. Gustative marketing cues were also tested in SA, Ghana, and China, and all variables collage on the role of consumer taste buds emanating from beverages or foods. Gustative marketing cues relate to what stimulates taste qualities, types of food offerings, or origin of food/beverages. All studies in Table 1 tested the role of olfactory marketing cues with a merging interest in product scent and ambience scent. The quality and tone of the music, sound, and background noise were the most recurring auditory marketing cues tested in Ghana, SA, and Zimbabwe, with a framework study in China suggesting that it be tested.

Table 2 summarises multi-sensory marketing cues from studies in developed countries.

Table 2: Summary of multi-sensory marketing cue models for developed countries

Cues	Variables tested	Country - Context Model developer(s) Data analysis method
Visual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Colour • Attraction 	Sweden - Retail stores Helmefalk & Berndt (2018) Multiple Regression Analysis
Auditory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sound • Music 	
Olfactory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sour taste • Sweet taste 	
Visual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Colour blue • Colour yellow 	UK - Retail stores Sagha <i>et al.</i> (2022) Multiple Regression Analysis
Olfactory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scented coffee • Coffee with vapor 	
Sounds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brand jingle • Background sound 	
Touch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Virtual helmets • Touch screen in the shops 	Lithuania - Restaurants Sliburytė & Ny (2017) Multiple Regression Analysis
Smell	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ambient scents • Smell of the products 	
Sound	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Music in the background • Ambient sounds 	
Olfactory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scented coffee • Coffee with vapor 	Australia- Retail stores Errajaa, Daucé & Legohere (2020) Structured Equation Modelling
Sound	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Background sound • Brand jingle 	
Visual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Size of visuals • Colour of visuals • Location of visuals • Quality of visuals 	
Gustative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sweetness vs sourness • Organic taste vs exotic taste 	USA - Restaurant Martkins (2014) Structured Equation Modelling
Tactile	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Durability of packaging • Quality of tangibles such as buildings, trolleys, and checkout stations 	
Touch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Soft-touch surfaces • Interactive touchscreens • Raised textures • Product packaging design 	
Taste	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sweet • Salty • Bitter • Sour • Savoury 	
Sound	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Music volume • Quality of music • Audibility of sender • Clutter sounds 	
Smell	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Odotypes • Aroma • Open air grill • Cleanliness 	
Sight	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Colour clarity • Lighting • Instore displays 	

Cues	Variables tested	Country - Context Model developer(s) Data analysis method
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Posters and signage • Exhibitions 	
Visual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Functional visuals • Aesthetic visuals • Social visuals 	USA- Food Biswas <i>et al.</i> (2021) Structured Equation Modelling
Auditory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Music sounds • Words or voices echoed • Ambient background sounds 	
Olfactory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ambient scent • Product scent • Signature brand scent 	

Source: Own compilation

Table 2 shows that the studies from developed economies were conducted between 2014 and 2022 on food or retail industry. The studies were conducted in the United Kingdom, Lithuania, Sweden, Australia, and two in the USA. Studies on a holistic approach to multi-sensory marketing cues are scarce in developed nations. Only two studies, one from Australia and one from the USA, took a holistic approach to multi-sensory marketing by studying all five senses. A Swedish study used an experimental research design in which single-sensory cues were compared to multi-sensory cues (Helmefalk & Berndt, 2018). A study from the UK examined tactile marketing cues. Biswas *et al.* (2021) study in the USA tested three sensory cues.

Similar marketing cues were tested for the studies conducted in developing countries. Customer and employee noise were tested with other sound-related matters for auditory cues. For olfactory cues, service interaction, ambient, product, and brand scent were tested. Visual cues include functional, aesthetic, and social visuals and visual measurements.

The next section discusses customer experience.

4.2 Customer experience studies

In this section, studies on customer experience in developing and developed countries are summarized. It is further indicated in which country the study was conducted and which method was used to analyze the data. Both the factors and the variables are listed. Table 3 presents a summary of the major studies that were deemed comprehensive and more useful for measuring customer experience in developing countries.

Table 3: Customer experience models for developing countries

Focus	Variables tested	Country – Context Model developer(s) Data analysis method
Brand experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impressions of fun 	China - Shopping malls

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impressions of caring • An interesting feeling • An innovative composure • A feeling of comfort • Impressions of pleasantness 	Zha <i>et al.</i> (2022) Secondary Data Analysis
Customer experience management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Virtual interaction experience • Physical interaction experience • Service interaction experience 	Zimbabwe - Banking Makudza (2021) Multiple Regression Analysis
Customer experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aesthetic appreciation • Affective experience, • Social experience • Cognitive 	Romania - Fintech Barbu <i>et al.</i> (2021) Structured Equation Modelling
Customer experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer satisfaction • Social regards • Loyalty behaviour 	Ghana – Oil Addae, Inkumsah & Amponsah (2021) Structured Equation Modelling
Customer experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Behaviour experience • Cognitive experience • Affective experience • Sensory experience • Social experience 	Iran – Restaurant and fast food Esmaeilpour & Mohseni (2019) Structured Equation Modelling

Source: Own compilation

Table 3 shows that studies from developed economies were conducted between the years 2019 and 2022 in Iran, Ghana, Zimbabwe, China, and Romania, focusing on different industries. Three of the four studies utilized the SEM data analysis method while only one conducted a MRA. The study in China by Zha *et al.* (2022) measured brand experience by considering the impressions that multi-sensory marketing evokes in shopping malls such as fun, care, freeing, and composure. The study points to customer experience as a feeling that can be assessed and tested based on how the customer portrays the impact of the sensory stimuli. On the other hand, the study in Zimbabwe by Makudza (2021) shows that customer experience needs to be managed in the banking industry, as it is not an automatic outcome. Thus, Makudza (2021) found significant associations between customer experience if attention is paid to virtual-, physical- and service interactions. The study further relates customer experience to customer loyalty behaviour. The same notion is akin to the study of Alfa *et al.* (2021) in Ghana, which found that customer experience can be measured and understood through loyalty behaviour, customer satisfaction, and social acceptance behaviour in the oil industry. Thus, the two studies from Ghana and Zimbabwe show that customer experience is an outcome effect of a deliberate customer experience management strategy, which can manifest through attributes such as loyalty.

The other two studies from Iran and Romania have a commonality in the psychological measurement of customer experience. Esmailpour and Mohseni (2019) and Barbu *et al.* (2021) concur that psychological attributes such as affective and emotional behaviour can be used to measure and understand the customer experience in the restaurant, fast food, and Fintech business environment. Esmailpour and Mohseni (2019) and Barbu *et al.* (2021) add behavioural and social attributes the understanding of customer experience. Table 4 shows the customer experience measurement from studies done in developed nations.

Table 4: Customer experience models for developed countries

Focus	Variables tested	Country – Context Model developer(s) Data analysis method
Customer experience quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emotional–related experiences • Staff-to-customer interaction experience • Customer-to-customer interaction experience • Learning experience • Atmospheric experience 	UK - Tourism Alnawas & Hemsley-Brown (2019) Structured Equation Modelling
Customer experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Front-line staff experience • Product experience • Service experience • Moments of truth 	UK – Public Housing Andrews & Turner (2017) Structured Equation Modelling
Customer experience journey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emotional engagement • Experiential involvement • Emotional competence 	France – Wealth management Ponsignon (2022) Multiple Regression Analysis
Customer experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Touchpoint experience • Convenience-point experience • Accessibility-point experience 	Italy – Retail Giraldi, Mengoni & Bevilacqua (2016) Secondary Data Analysis

Source: Own compilation

Table 4 shows that the studies from developed countries were conducted between 2016 and 2022 in the UK, France, and Italy in the tourism, public housing, wealth management and retail industries. Two of the four studies utilized the SEM data analysis method, one utilised MRA and one EDA. A study in the UK measured customer experience by relating it to the emotional experiences that good customer quality brings. The same line of thought was used by Ponsignon (2022 in France, where they measured customer experience as an emotional journey. Customer experience can also be examined from product-, service- and staff experiences and shopping interactions (Andrews & Turner, 2017). In Italy, customer experiences were considered from an access, convenience, and touchpoint view.

5. Managerial Implications

The dynamic nature of consumer behaviour and the fast expansion of retail shopping malls underscore the necessity of creating a multi-sensory marketing cues model to optimise the performance of the retail mall industry. With the increase in online shopping, shopping malls must consider how they can market more effectively to draw more foot traffic. The current study adds to the scant information on multi-sensory marketing cues and consumer experience in shopping malls. Retail shopping malls saw a decrease in customer traffic during the COVID-19 epidemic, which means there is a need to appeal to and pique customers' senses at every contact point in the mall to keep them interested. Because it considered each of the five sensory cues that impact consumers, the hypothesised model presented in this research is incredibly comprehensive and robust. The model also illustrates that there can be interactions between the sensory cues that have not been tested previously. A validated model designed specifically for developing nations may be ratified to help African nations create multi-sensory marketing strategies for their retail malls to increase foot traffic. Targeting consumers through strategic sensory marketing strategies enhanced the exceptional customer experience. Thus, the model's cue attributes might serve as a checklist for marketing tactics to stimulate the human senses when frequenting retail shopping malls. When five marketing multi-sensory cues are considered, the retail shopping malls industry in Africa can experience growth, and their countries' economies can grow. Paying attention to multi-sensory marketing can also enhance the visitor experience to attract more customers daily.

6. Conclusions, Limitations and Future Research

From the preceding discussions, multi-sensory marketing was considered in previous studies either holistically by analysing the effect of five sensory cues on the predictor variable or by taking a single sensory cue approach and analysing the outcome of each sensory cue but ignoring the combined effect of all the cues. In any case, very few studies exist on multi-sensory marketing cues' role in creating a superior customer experience. Although several studies in developing and developed countries regarded customer experience as a variable, some measured it from a psychological perspective and others from a driving-source perspective. The difficulties of earlier research lie in that most studies did not fully focus on all five senses in multi-sensory marketing. Those models that considered all the five senses presented a weakness in that none of them analysed the associations among the five senses and did not relate sensory marketing to customer experience. Not many studies on sensory marketing focus on shopping malls but more on the retail clothing, hotel, and food industries.

Touching may increase impulse buying as it indicates the quality of the product. Smell triggers human emotions and can thus act as a means of differentiation. Sound is extensively used in the form of music in all stores and can either be used as a communication medium to arouse customers'

subconscious to a certain brand/product or to speed up or increase the purchasing process. Visuals are the most used sense to see different characteristics of an object or store visuals. Taste differs from person to person and is thus more complex to apply. All five senses affect the bringing about of a sensory experience. A sensory experience might enable customers to develop behavioural and/or emotional values toward the mall, retail stores, services, or products for sale in the mall. The retail atmosphere can prompt selling and in the mall context increase foot traffic. Therefore, an innovative sensory marketing strategy including all five human senses must be developed for each mall to survive in the intensely competitive market.

Based on the preceding systematic literature on multi-sensory marketing cues and customer experience and the research gap on the interplay of the sensory cues, Figure 1 presents a proposed interlaced model of the relationships between multi-sensory marketing and customer experience. The proposed model's unique contribution and appeal are its focus on how the interplay of the five senses affects each other and the customer experience.

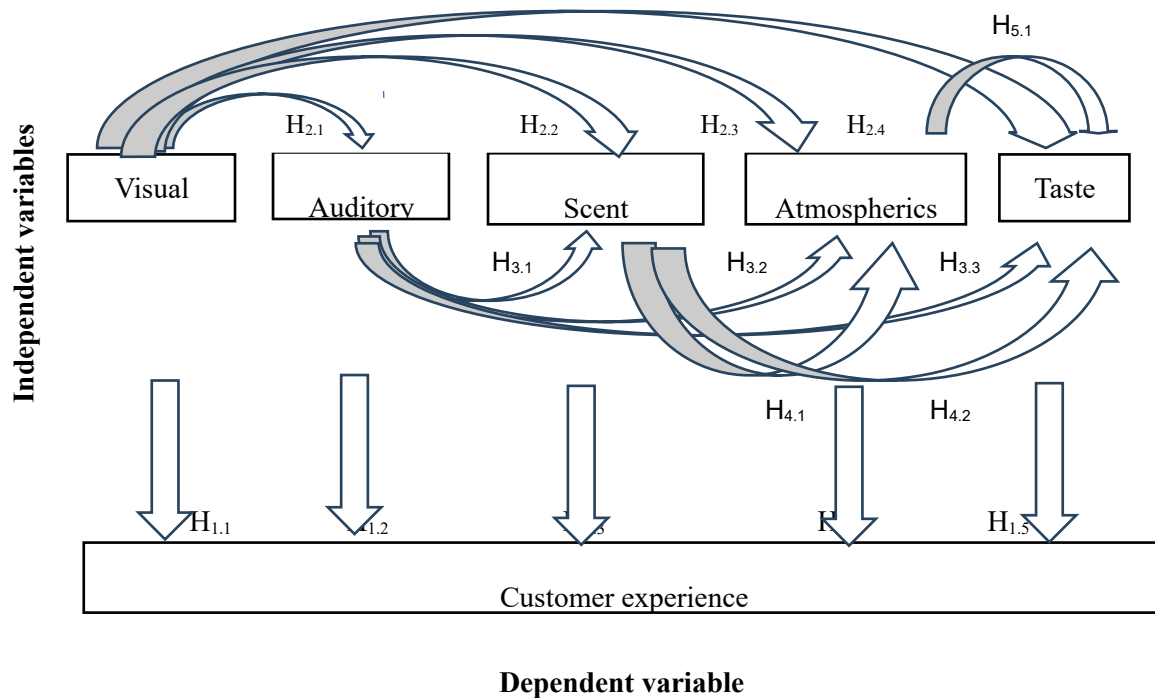


Figure 1: Proposed multi-sensory marketing and shopping mall customer experience conceptual model

Source: Researchers' own construct

Based on the hypothesized research model, five sets of research hypotheses were developed. The first set of hypotheses to test the influence of the five sensory cues on customer experience are:

H_{1.1}: Visual marketing influences customer experience in South African retail shopping malls.

H_{1.2}: Auditory marketing influences customer experience in South African retail shopping malls.

H_{1.3}: Scent marketing influences customer experience in South African retail shopping malls.

H_{1.4}: Atmospherics marketing influences customer experience in South African retail shopping malls.

H_{1.5}: Taste marketing influences customer experience in South African retail shopping malls.

The second set of hypotheses developed to test the influence of visual marketing on the other sensory marketing cues: are

H_{2.1}: Visual marketing influences auditory marketing.

H_{2.2}: Visual marketing influences scent marketing;

H_{2.3}: Visual marketing influences atmospherics marketing.

H_{2.4}: Visual marketing influences taste marketing.

The third set of hypotheses developed to test the influence of auditory marketing on the other sensory marketing cues are:

H_{3.1}: Auditory marketing influences scent marketing.

H_{3.2}: Auditory marketing influences atmospherics marketing.

H_{3.3}: Auditory marketing influences taste marketing.

The fourth set of hypotheses developed to test the influence of scent marketing on the other sensory marketing cues are:

H_{4.1}: Scent marketing influences atmospherics marketing.

H_{4.2}: Scent marketing influences taste marketing.

The fifth hypothesis developed tests:

H_{5.1}: Atmospherics marketing influences taste marketing.

Figure 2 presents the variables that can be tested for each cue factor.

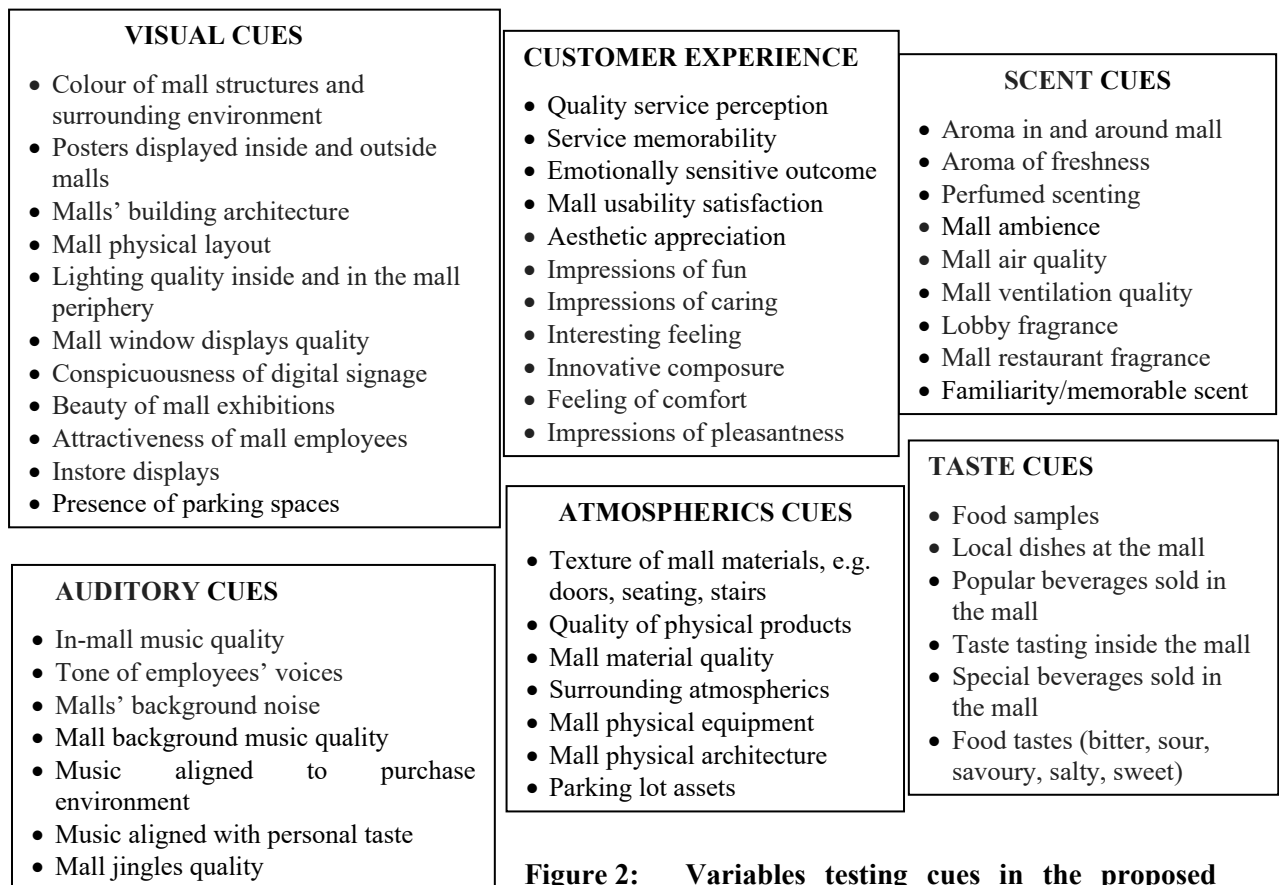


Figure 2: Variables testing cues in the proposed

conceptual framework

Source: Own compilation

The limitations of this study lie in that many cue variables are generic and not necessarily just related to creating a mall experience. It is merely a framework and not a tested empirical model. However, given that there is not a comprehensive tested model for SA or African countries available, this paper

can contribute to academic knowledge on how to test sensory marketing in the mall context. Future research can test the proposed multi-sensory model as a once-off-cross sectional survey, longitudinal survey, or comparative study. This study could be a once-off survey that involves collecting data on a specific mall or comparing the cues' expectations at different malls. The study could be repeated to make the necessary inferences from the same mall at different times to validate changes in customer experiences due to sensory stimuli changes over time. A comparative study may analyse how malls could combine different sensory stimuli for a superior customer experience.

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