

## A Study on the Influence of Senses and the Effectiveness of Sensory Branding

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### Abstract

The human senses have long been unnoticed, despite their responsiveness being of great importance. The five human senses are of great importance for an individual's experience of different purchase, frequency of purchase and consumption process. It is through the human senses that a customer can differentiate one brand from similar brands. Marketers have to market their brand or the dedicated point of sale (POS) along with the sensory attributes like touch, taste, smell, sight and sound that will generate the activation of emotions that make customers desire a given product. This is called "Sensory Branding". Multi-sensory brand experience when more than one of the five senses contributes to the perception of sensory experience and how an individual reacts when a firm interacts. Multisensory convergence zones in the human brain indicate that one sense can be affected by relations with other senses.

**Keywords** Sensory branding; Senses; Perception; Emotion; Point of sales; Purchase; Multi-sensory experience

### Practical Implication

The sensory, emotional and cognitive processes of the human brain are also related to neuromarketing-an emerging research which could allow for greater insight into customer behaviour. The conscious perception of advertising facilitated by multi-sensory experience could lead to brands becoming personalized to the consumer. Increasingly people have become more brand conscious and to a certain group of people (niche market) experience is what matters and not the price of the product because the product taps the emotions and feelings of the customer. Sensory studies can help identify how to engage the customer and bring about a feeling in buying the product even if they had idea/plan in buying it. In this paper a model is proposed to study how the senses influence the consumer in their buying decision, brand loyalty, brand choice because end of the day be it any company profits and revenue generation is what matters.

### Introduction

"Almost our entire understanding of the world is experienced through our senses." Martin Lindstrom, Brand Sense. Brands can create emotional associations in the customer's mind by appealing to their senses. Sensory Branding is a type of marketing that appeal to all the senses (sight, smell, touch, sound, taste) in relation to the brand. Sensory branding has been one of the most important marketing tools used by the top successful companies like Apple, Starbucks, Singapore airlines, etc., Sensory experience of the brands help to create brand loyalty and thereby increase sales and revenues of the company. It is evident from studies that customers make buying decisions based on the perception of the brand and that the perception is formed a collection of stimulations that come from the sensory receptors. A

strong brand is one that can capitalize on the human senses that can enhance, affirm and create trust with the customers. Sensory marketing is a technique that aims to seduce the consumer by using his/her senses to influence feelings and behaviour. Senses are strongly linked to our memories and emotions. Five sensorial strategies are suggested that highlight the human senses as the centre of the company's sensory marketing. According to Marc Gobe, author of the book "Emotional Branding", every brand should contain subliminal codes that trigger the perception of positive emotions with regard to a product.

According to Rieunier, the sensory marketing approach tries to fill in the deficiencies of the "traditional marketing" which is too rational. Classic marketing is based on the idea that the customer is rational. Sensory marketing put the experiences lived by the consumers and his/her feelings in the process. These experiences have sensorial, emotional, cognitive, behavioural and relational dimensions, not only functional. Sensory marketing aims to create the adequacy of the products with their design and their packaging, and then to valorize (maintaining the value or price of a product) them in a commercial environment to make them attractive. There, the consumer is behaving according to his impulsions and emotions. The fortune 500 companies have understood that the five senses (sight, smell, touch, taste, sound) play a vital role in branding and establishing a marketing strategy that appeals to multiple senses which is essential for future brand building and revenue generation in the past eight years. A multi-sensory brand experience generates certain beliefs, feelings, thoughts and opinions to create a brand image in the consumer's mind [ 1-10] Figure 1-6.

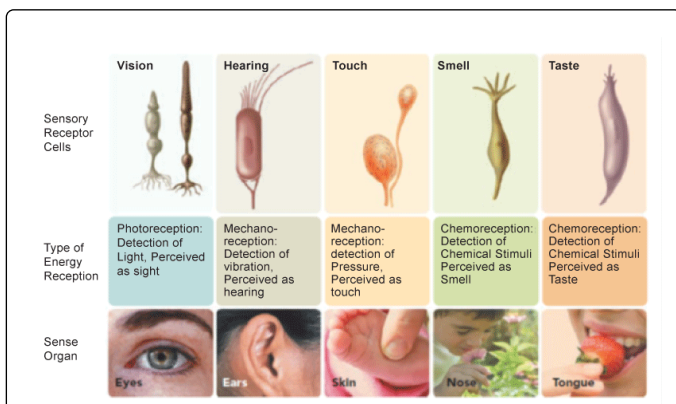
Martin Lindstrom discusses about "smash your brand" and the important theory within

Sensory branding motivates relationship with the brand

Allows emotional response to take over rationale thinking

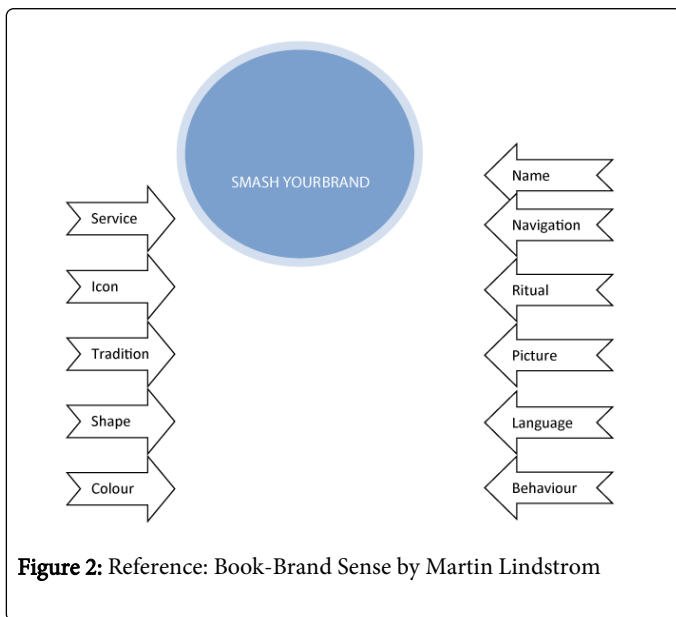
Offers different dimensions of a single brand

Builds a strong, positive and loyal bond between the brand and consumer



**Figure 1:** Human Senses: Organs, Energy Stimuli, and Sensory Receptors-The receptor cells for each sense are specialized to receive particular types of energy stimuli. Source: Chapter3-Sensory and Perception by McGraw hill Higher Education

### Emotional Engagement



**Figure 2:** Reference: Book-Brand Sense by Martin Lindstrom

### Theoretical Building

The marketplace of today has undergone a significant change, where we have gone from selling and promoting products and services to selling and enticing customers through experiences. 99 percent of all brand communication currently focuses on only two of the senses – sight and sound. Companies should appeal towards customer feelings, enabling faster responses. When it comes to sight “only a small 19% of consumers worldwide believe the look of an item of clothing is more important than how it feels. Whereas a good half of them place the

emphasis on feel rather than appearance” (Brand Sense) [11-16]. Goldkuhl and Styven mentioned that vision and sound seem to be only two things that were used prevalently. The human senses have been identified as important factors in consumer behaviour, where they have been acknowledged as powerful cues influencing our emotions, perception and behaviour. It is also emphasized that tactile input will have a positive impact on the consumer response as well as their perception of product quality discusses the need to include a combination of sensory inputs to provide the customer with an experience that can be enjoyed in full force and they state that sensory pleasure is a result of a combination of sensory inputs. Rodrigues highlights that sensorial strategies can be possible for a company to use as a differentiation factor, but also as a means to impact consumers’ behaviour in their purchase and consumption process by testing the individual mind. If the marketer use sensory stimuli in appropriate way, it is able to influence decision- making and hence the propensity to spend (Soars). Sensory marketing is found in every industry especially in the service industry.

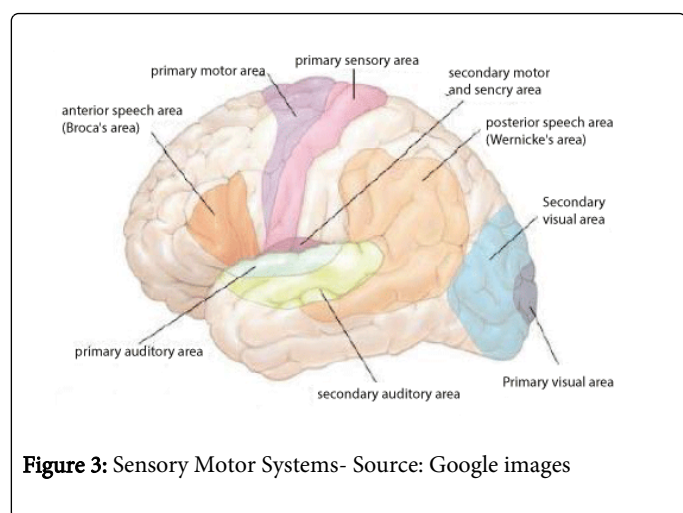
Businesses like restaurant, hotel and departmental store use marketing activities through sense of the customer for example, the colour of the sign, the song played in the store, scent of bakery, sampling of the snack, packing and representation and even the feel of the fabric. In service industries, if the service can use scents that can trigger memories of pleasant emotions, it could be the powerful tool in order to create loyalty to a brand or service. Brenda Soars explained that sensory stimuli could influence environments, improve the shopper experience and change the nature of behaviour in ways beyond our consciousness and she also mentioned that if the sensory tool is used appropriately, it can influence the decision making and also have positive attitude and approach from customers. The desire to consider the store environment as a multidimensional concept made up of music, scents, colors, lights, design, etc., are critical to reach its customers [1]. Sense of sound is linked to emotions and feelings and the sense impacts brand experiences and interpretations. Impressions of smell have been discussed by Goldkuhl and Styfve’n. The sense of smell is related to pleasure and well-being and is closely connected to emotions and memories. Taste impressions have been analyzed empirically by Biedekarken and Henneberg. The sense of taste is the most distinct emotional sense and often interacts with other senses. Finally, touch impressions have been discussed by Peck and Wiggins among others. The sense of touch is the tactile one, related to information and feelings about a product through physical and psychological interactions [17-22].

According to the samresearch.com, leading European consultant in consumer research, the hedonic marketing can be defined as a valuable tool in gaining sensory consumer insights for framing a marketing strategy via five ways

- Quantifying and explaining consumer emotions
- Spotting and exploiting on new market opportunities
- An opportunity to maximize product profitability & revenues
- Ensuring first and repeat purchase (loyalty)
- Ensuring long-lasting product success

Sensors	Sensations	Sensory Expressions
Smell Sensor	Atmospheric	Product congruence, intensity and sex Atmosphere, advertency and theme Scent brand and signature scent
Sound Sensor	Auditory	Jingle, voice and music Atmosphere, attentiveness and theme Signature sound and sound brand
Sight Sensor	Visual	Design, packaging and style Color, light and theme Graphic, exterior and interior
Taste Sensor	Gastronomic	Interplay, symbiosis and synergies Name, presentation and environment Knowledge, lifestyle and delight
Touch Sensor	Tactile	Material and surface Temperature and weight Form and steadiness

**Table 1:** Sensors, Sensations and Sensory Expressions Source



**Figure 3:** Sensory Motor Systems- Source: Google images

This is an image of the functional areas of the sensory regions of the brain. The sensory/input regions in the cortex are situated in the posterior part of the brain. The parietal, temporal and occipital lobes enclose the visual cortex (eye), auditory cortex (ear), somatosensory cortex (body) where information coming from the eyes, ears and body are processed. This large area encircling three cortical lobes also functions as the area of cortex processes where information from various senses is bound together for higher order processing in a multisensory perception of the world. The motor/output regions of the cortex are located in the frontal lobe just besides the primary sensory area. The close physical connection between the somatosensory cortex and the motor cortex allows for a tight pairing between senses of touch, pressure and pain and the action or motor system. The posterior half deals with perceptual present and the anterior half tries to predict and control the future. Cognition is forward looking and proactive rather than reactive.

### Auditory

Music lovers are aware that sound can be incredibly powerful in creating emotional connections and triggering memories. The ping of Intel, growl of Harley Davidson engine, the tune of Britannia, jingle of blackberry (we are blackberry boys), etc. The companies are trying to make a strong relationship between their customers and brand through its sound identity so that the particular sound remains in the customer's mind and whenever the customer comes across that sound

he/she is able to associate that sound to the particular brand. Additional studies approve a direct connection between the type of music played and the overall satisfaction. Eg: Sunburn concerts and various other concerts happening all around the world. The anatomy and connectivity of the auditory system is very complex with multiple stages of processing, which involves complex interactions between inputs and existing memory and experiences as well as with other sensory systems. Music helps influence mood and it has been proven to affect the shopping pace and the actual time spent in the store. The use of English in advertising has come to suggest a social stereotype that symbolizes modernity, sophistication, progress and a cosmopolitan identity.

### Visual

The first and foremost is sight when it comes to identifying a brand (logo) so it dominates over the other four and it is the most seductive sense of all. Vision is the sense that helps us to know what is where and these functions in the brain are called the ventral pathway (what) and dorsal pathway (where). The brain processes visual features such as colour, orientation, motion texture and stereoscopic depth (perception of depth and 3-D structure obtained on the basis of visual information deriving from two eyes). Sight is the most relied upon and important sense for most humans and often drives a first impression. "Vision is all about light. As early as the fifth century BC the Greeks recognized the link between the eye and the objects seen. By the 4th century BC Aristotle rejected the idea that a visual fire emanated from the eye, reasoning that if vision were produced by fire in the eye, we would see in the dark. The difference between our day and night vision is that our night vision is colour-blind".

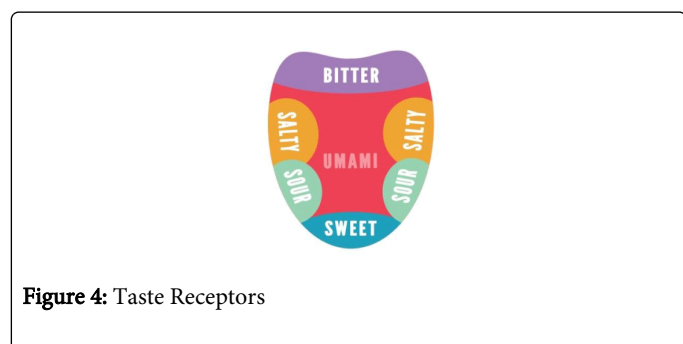
### Olfactory

Studies on olfactory show that odours can be used as an asset to change consumer's mood, by making them feel more comfortable and relaxed. Relating back to Proustian effect, it's named after the Marcel Proust, the brilliant author who wrote novel and essays way back in 1900s and he is often considered as the father of modern novel and he was the first one to state that our smell is linked to our memory. A study states that school children show a better performance when exposed to a positive scent. Singapore Airlines in 1990 took a step forward in creating a multidimensional brand experience by having its own patented scent created for the cabin crew, employees and infused it in the hot towels

given to the travellers. In 1991 the company made a profit of \$153 million which was higher than the previous year. Martin Lindstrom reports that the scent is now seen by travellers as distinctly Asian and feminine, and remind travellers of smooth comfortable journeys, reflecting the effectiveness of this sensory branding ploy. British Airways have also come out with a new scent. It's not only the airline industry that uses scent but also the Hotels (Peninsula Hotel Group). Scent enhances the product distinctiveness, which helps customers remember it down the line. It's believed that scent could bring a powerful impact on consumers' behaviour. It can contribute a favourable perception of the services. The smell sense is closely related to our emotional life and the scents can have a strong impact on our emotions and that's because olfactory nerve goes straight in to the limbic system (where emotions reside) and especially close to amygdala. So, it has direct connection to the emotions. On an average a human being can remember more than 10,000 scents and the sensitivity of a scent experienced in the past is enough to associate with earlier memories. Scents can add to sensory experiences that create long lasting memory pictures in the customer's intellect and build awareness and create an image of a brand both short term and long term. The \$35 billion fragrance market is growing fastest in the BRICs. Celebrity fragrances have proved to be successful at attracting new and younger customers

### Gustatory

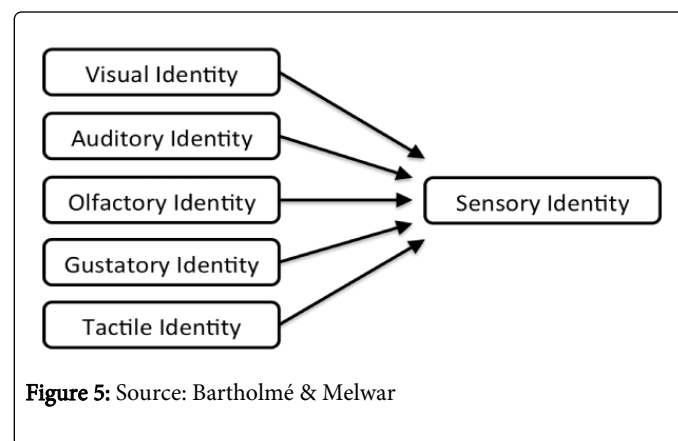
The sensation of taste like all sensations resides in the brain and Humans detect taste with taste receptor cells. The five primary taste sensations are salty, sour, sweet, bitter and umami (savory flavour-found in mushrooms, soya sauce, sea foods, etc.). The food industry is highly mastered and exploited to adapt to regional preferences. The oral sense and somatosensory are closely related. Studies show that there is a direct connection between perceived food quality and consumers intentions on becoming regulars. It is important that restaurants make it very clear what consumers can expect. Because if consumers have different dining motivations, it is most likely that they assess the experience differently, this finally might lead to dissatisfaction. Another study explains that all consumers have particular favourite meals, and that they tend to link them with fine memories from the past, meaning that if restaurants start serving these dishes they automatically becomes a part of these personal evocative memories. Singapore Airlines are also known for their special flavor food like chicken rice that gives a taste of Asian food.



### Tactile

Feel/touch of a product is the major drive for its sales. Apparel industry drives on this fact. Many people don't prefer online shopping

(apparels) is because of one major reason and that they cannot feel/ touch the fabric. Psychology research has shown that after consumers have felt a product, they experience a small sense of ownership, making them more likely to buy it. Amazon gained reputation in online shopping because they cater to books only and that does not require feeling the product. The feeling of the smooth, silky surface of an ad in a magazine, no doubt, generates an emotional bond with the advertised brand. Some disagree that our growing thirst for extreme flavour is being determined by an aging population who are looking for taste sensations to pep up taste buds and olfactory nerves. Taste thresholds continue to get bigger, particularly in the food and beverage category, where previously intense (sour, spicy, bitter) or exotic flavours have been agreed to by the mainstream. U.S. spice company McCormick has reported a 70% increase in sales of its extra-hot chipotle pepper since its commencing five years ago. Transmission of information from the receptors passes via sensory nerves through tracts in the spinal cord and in to the brain.



### Multi-Sensory Branding

A multi-sensory brand experience generates certain beliefs, feelings, thoughts and opinions to create a brand image in the consumer's mind. A multi-sensory brand-experience takes place when more than one of the five senses contributes to the perception of sensory experiences. "A multi-sensory brand-experience supports individual value creation and refers to how individuals react when a firm interacts, and supports their purchase and consumption processes through the involvement of the five human senses in generating customer value, experiences, and brand as image". In the multi-sensory experience concept, branding has shifted from the 2D branding to multi/5D branding. Five dimensional branding is an intensified brand experience that can't be gained by the magnification of one individual sense. At the recently-opened Ferrari World in Abu Dhabi, visitors are invited to experience multisensory immersion into the sights, sounds and smells of Ferrari's Italian heritage and rides that simulate the G-force of Formula 1 racing. Pioneering brands are focusing on all aspects of the multisensory brand experience. Nissan plans to launch in-car aromatherapy forest air conditioning, which will deliver scents that assist in maintaining alertness and deliver vitamin C to help hydrate human skin. What's interesting about these examples is the extent to which they demonstrate how physical sensations are able to create deeper emotional connections by activating people's primal needs and desires. Senses that bond with each other become a catalyst in the creation of synergy which is the key for senses to interact and bond with consumers.



The old marketing acronym WYSIWYG is quite catchy but out dated so why not put it under the sensory lens and make it 5D by replacing “see” with “hear, feel, taste & smell”.

Projecting WYSIWYG up in 5D

‘What you see is what you get’

‘What you hear is what you get’

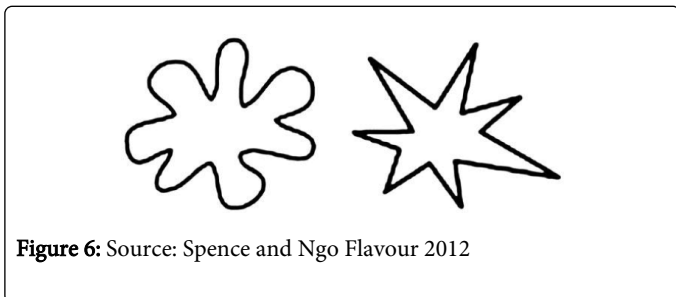
‘What you feel is what you get’

‘What you taste is what you get’

‘What you smell is what you get’

### Cross-modal Correspondence

A crossmodal correspondence refers to the tendency of a sensory perception to be matched with an expectation for another sense (Spence). For example, consuming hot chocolate in a dark-cream colour cup (i.e. visual perception), influences the perceived sweet taste and intensity of aroma of the hot chocolate. In terms of product naming and product packaging consistent crossmodal correspondence has been found with sound and shape symbolism (e.g. the association between ‘i’ sound and smallness has been demonstrated in many different culture/languages across the world) and similarly there exists a crossmodal correspondence between shape symbolism and taste/flavours.



When asked Which of these shapes is called ‘Baluma,’ (or ‘Maluma’ or ‘Bouba’) and which is called ‘Takete’ (or ‘Kiki’). The majority of people around the world pair the more organic amoeba-like shape with the ‘rounded’ speech sounds of ‘Baluma’.

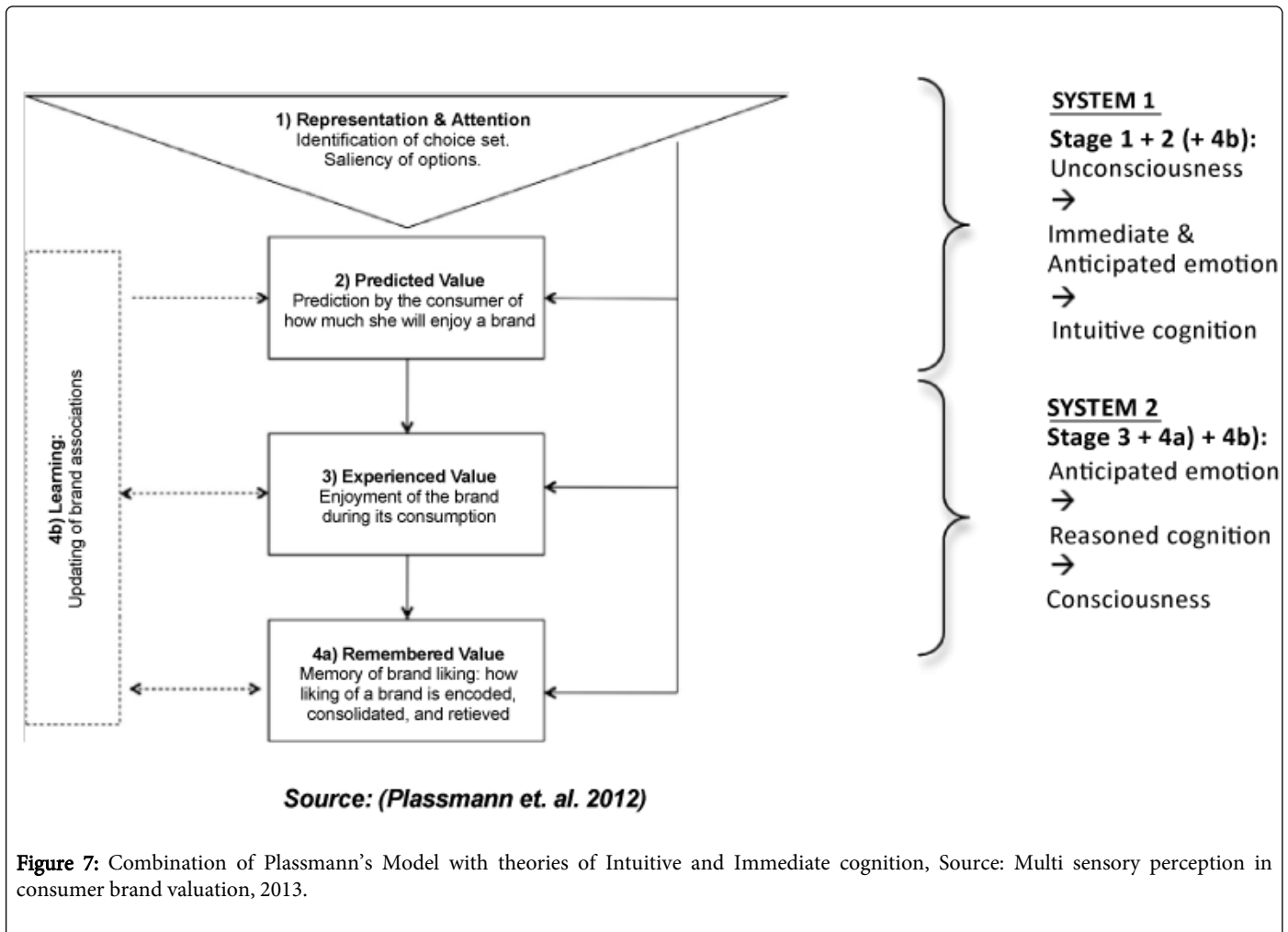
Previous researches done gives a glimpse of how the location of non-visual stimulus may influence the liking of a target visual stimulus or how the former may influence the attention paid to the latter. According to Nespresso, **60% of sensory experience of drinking**

**espresso comes from the retail environment.** Nestle unit Nespresso not only customized its home brewing equipment to release more enticing smells, they even launched a chain of coffee shops offering customers a rich olfactory experience just to address the perceived sensory gap in the home environment. Hence, it is said that enriching the POS with pleasant smells is the key to success. In an early study, participants equipped with headphones were simultaneously exposed to two auditory streams, one in each ear, and asked to track the stream that they were hearing in either the right ear or the left ear. Their eyes were found to move in the corresponding direction (i.e., right or left, respectively). Thus, they were found to “look where they listened” Another study found evidence for crossmodal facilitation effects in the reverse direction: participants were found to increase auditory attention in the direction at which they were currently looking (i.e., they “listened where they looked”. Researchers have also found that the act of mentally focusing toward a target without actually moving one’s eyes or ears in that direction. Researchers have argued that this facilitation effect is likely driven by functional reasons. In daily life, people often need to integrate information from different sensory modalities (e.g., visual, auditory, somatosensory) relating to the same external event or stimulus. For example, when eating a bowl of popcorn, a consumer may derive enjoyment not just from its taste but also from the smell of the butter, the feel of the popcorn in the hands, its visual appearance, and so on.

### Decision Making & Cognition

Plassmann has defined four stages that are involved in consumer preference formation in Value based decision making. The four stages are 1.Representation and Attention, 2.Predicted Value, 3.Experienced Value and 4.Remembered Value and Learning,

demonstrating the decision making process as a learning loop. Figure 7, shows the decision stages that involves several emotional and cognitive processes for valuation. Daniel Kahneman has introduced the process of two cognitive systems that Humans use for information processing and they are: Intuition (system 1) and Reasoning (system2). System 1 is fast, experiential, automatic and driven by immediate emotions. System 2 is rational, slow, analytical, deliberate and logical and can be parallelized with emotions, which are awoken in relation to the gains and loss spectrum of a decision. The result of combining Plassmann’s model with the theories of intuitive/reasoned cognition and immediate/anticipated emotion is portrayed in the Figure 8 below [22].



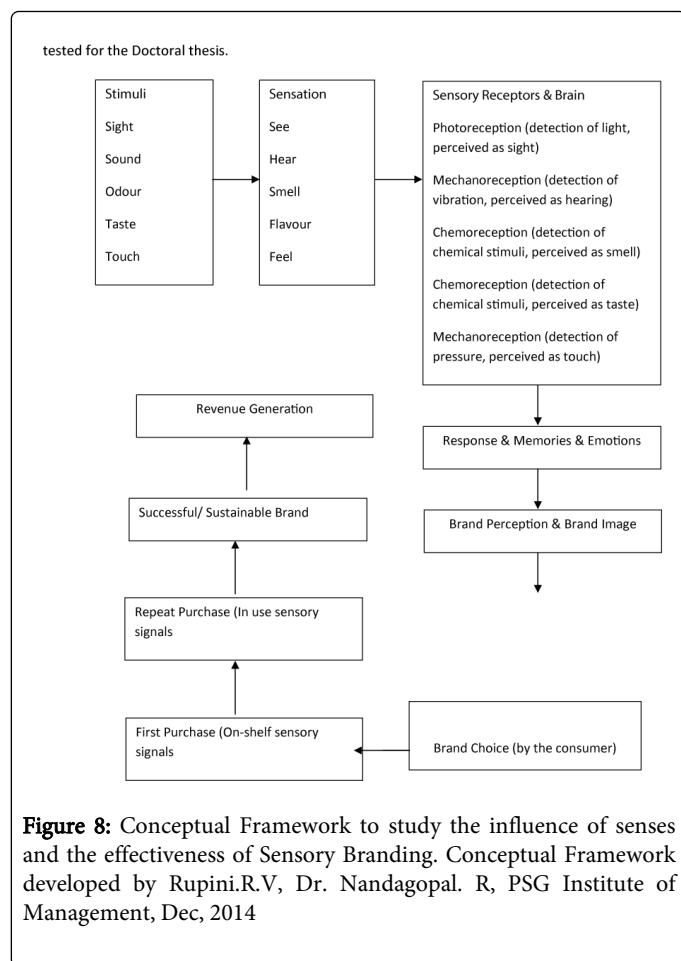
## Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework was arrived with an intensive literature review study. The model will be tested for the Doctoral thesis.

## Conclusion

The purpose of sensory branding is to provide a systematic integration of the senses. Lindstrom mentioned that if the consumer's senses are more involved, it more strongly connect with the brand which means that It can increased willingness to pay more. Sensory interplay gives the consumer a deeper holistic sensory experience.

This will stimulate and intensify the bond between the brand and consumer. Brands that lack sensory appeal fail to connect with human extensions in to the product or services. The main reason behind creating a brand based on sensory appeal is because they are memorable, unique, instantaneous and support human-centered design. Sensory branding is not about the masses or the segment, it is about the individual. An advertising experience is not the same as sensory experience for the individual. It is necessary for firms to come closer to the five human Consumers have become visually sophisticated and consciously selective, creating new challenges in branding. Goods or services, not only in a physical or functional sense, but also in an emotional sense, should conform to an individual's personal and social-life context. senses to allow a sensory marketing approach to become more profitable and successful.



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