The Effect of Sensory Marketing on Brand Loyalty: The Mediating Role of Customer Experience Applied to Cafes

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Abstract This study aims to examine the effect of sensory marketing on brand loyalty, with customer experience as a mediating variable. The findings aim to help marketing managers in the café industry develop a strong competitive advantage in an increasingly saturated market.A conceptual model was developed based on a literature review and affirmed by exploratory research. The main part of this research is a quantitative approach. Data were collected through 211 online questionnaires from café visitors using a non-probability convenience sample.

The study employed Spearman's correlation to examine the relationships among sensory marketing, brand loyalty, and customer experience, and utilized Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to test the hypotheses. The results indicate that sensory marketing and customer experience have moderate positive relationship with brand loyalty. However, the direct relationship between sensory marketing and brand loyalty is weak. Moreover, SEM analysis confirmed that sensory marketing does not directly impact brand loyalty without customer experience as a mediator, indicating complete mediation.Based on the findings, several recommendations are proposed for marketing managers in cafés to enhance sensory marketing strategies and improve customer experience to foster brand loyalty. For instance, implementing an electronic loyalty card that can be scanned instead of using traditional stamps could streamline the process and enhance customer experience.The study acknowledges certain limitations, including a focus on specific variables. Future research is encouraged to explore additional factors that may influence brand loyalty and customer experience in the café industry.

Keywords: Self-Verification-Theory, Self-Concept-Theory, Taste, Smell, Sound, Sight, Sound, Touch.

Introduction

In modern day, a lot of companies try to apply a marketing technique called sensory marketing. According to Han et al. (2019), it is composed of visual, audio, scent, and touch that are used to deliver certain information to the customer. Each one of those senses can be used in a variety of ways in order to grab the attention of the consumer. Sensory marketing is described as a way that consumers experience the world through the senses; consumers' decisions are affected in a way that may happen through their subconsciousness (Shahid et al., 2022). Creating a good brand experience for the customers and focusing on the consumer's experience is an important factor for having a competitive advantage in the market and overall success. According to Lucas (2023), consumer experience encloses the overall interaction between a company and a customer throughout the entire customer journey and across all touchpoints. It includes all the aspects of how the customer interacts with a company, its services, and its products while perceiving them. As mentioned by Bueno (2019), focusing on creating a good customer experience is important and can create a unique advantage for any company over time. Moreover, brand loyalty has become very important to businesses as it ensures revenues with minimal expenses. Brand loyalty can be measured on three different dimensions, which are behavioral loyalty, attitudinal loyalty, and cognitive loyalty. Preferring one brand over another is considered to be behavioral loyalty; attitudinal loyalty can be seen as an emotional and psychological attachment to a certain brand, and cognitive loyalty is having positive thoughts before buying from a certain brand (Singh & Keltz, 2020).

The restaurant and café industry in Egypt is huge and always growing; 180 billion dollars were generated in revenue alone from this industry in 2023. This industry contributed 24% of Egypt's GDP in 2022; furthermore, in the upcoming years, it is expected to have an annual growth of 10% (Statista, 2023). Therefore, creating a competitive advantage for themselves in order to stay on top is becoming essential. Sensory marketing can play a pivotal role, as it has the biggest impact on the customers that visit restaurants and cafes, since if a customer goes to one and is faced with any un-satisfactory experience as for example the place is not clean, it is most likely that they either leave the place, or leave a bad review on it. Moreover, according to Isaac, Keelson, and Yiadom (2023), if customers visit a restaurant or a cafe and one of their senses is not pleased once they are inside, it would ruin their whole experience and would most likely lead them not to visit the place again. Therefore, it is very important that cafes and restaurants care and put effort into creating the sensory plan, and they should care about having the appropriate aroma, decor, taste, material, and music that goes with the identity so they could create the best experience for their customers and potentially turn them into loyal customers.

Therefore, the aim of this research is to measure the effect of sensory marketing on brand loyalty with the mediating role of customer experience in the cafe sector in Egypt. And help create a strong competitive advantage for cafe owners in such fierce competition, and gain loyalty from the customers.

Literature review
In this section, the researchers will delve into a thorough review of the literature regarding the main variables of the study and finally conclude the relationship between the independent variables and dependent variables.

Self-Concept Theory
According to Zhang, Jiménez, and Cicala (2020), the theory of self-concept was developed by Gottfredson and Hirschi, and it is a basic concept in sociology and psychology that explores how

individuals understand, perceive, and define themselves. Moreover, it encloses the perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes that people hold about their own identity, encompassing various aspects in their lives, such as their personality, abilities, physical appearance, and social roles. Furthermore, as stated by Huitt (2004), the self-concept theory goes into the complex interaction between an individual's feelings, self-perception, and thoughts, and it plays an important role in shaping an individual's ideal self, self-esteem, and self-image. The ideal self represents the image of the most and best desired version of oneself, acting as a motivational force for personal achievement and the development of their goal. Self-esteem shows the extent to which an individual perceives themselves as capable, competent, lovable, and deserving of respect. Self-image refers to the emotional and mental perception that individuals have over themselves; it is how someone sees themselves, both in terms of their external and internal characteristics.

Moving on, this theory has extensive implications for understanding human relationships, personal development, and behavior as it influences how people interact with the world and interpret their experiences. According to Jeong and Ko (2021), socially acceptable values are internalized through the process of developing a self-concept, and these values are then essential in shaping the motivations behind core behaviors. Consumers create purchasing behavior in order to maintain the coherence of their beliefs and acts, or self-respect, and this acts as a mechanism for defining their self-concept.

Therefore, this theory and sensory marketing are related in how a customer would relate to a place with any of their senses. For example, if they see their personality in the decoration ambiance, and the environment of the place that defines them. Some people see themselves as outgoing and extroverted, which a colorful, spectacular place would define them. Other people see themselves as introverts and deep, which in return, a place with a paler color palette and simple decorations would define their personality. Thus, a person tends to feel comfortable with a place that reflects their inner self. Moreover, it is also related to the result of becoming a loyal customer to the brand and how some people are loyal to specific brands since they see that this specific cafe, for example, describes them and is a part of their personality. Moreover, the theory of self-verification will be studied as a way to understand the gap this research tackles.

Self-Verification Theory
Self-verification theory talks about how people would like for others to view them as they view themselves, and they will take steps in order to make sure that others view them accordingly, which is a social psychology theory (Talaifar& Swann, 2020). This theory entails the idea of how people behave in a certain way that they feel represents how they view themselves. According to van der Westhuizen (2018), behavior, senses, feelings, or thoughts are not the only triggers for self-verification, but it includes the entire experience in total through all angles of the brand experience when a brand stimulus is being interacted with.

This theory relates to sensory marketing and brand loyalty as it defines the consumer and their needs, as a consumer's brand loyalty will increase towards a brand if the consumer can identify themselves with the brand. Simultaneously, if the sensory marketing tools correspond with the customers' perception of themselves and their preferences, they will subconsciously prefer that cafe over others. For example, if a person perceives themselves as belonging to a specific class, they would certainly attend places that reflect their perception and how they want others to see them attend the places that reflect this to others.

Sensory Marketing
According to Kim et al. (2020), sensory marketing is any judgment of the customer that is influenced one way or another due to the customer's senses. It is a concept that relies on using the five senses of

the customer, which are sound, smell, sight, taste, and touch. Thus, sensory marketing is a tactic that can be used to differentiate a company from its competitors by making more sensory touchpoints with the consumer. Each of those senses can either be used separately or in combination by the business in order to create memories or an emotional attachment to the brand. Hussain (2018) declared that businesses tend to use sensory marketing in order to create a pleasant environment in order for the consumer to enjoy coming to the business and prolong their stay in the business, and revisit in the future. Furthermore, Helmefalk (2019) and Hussain (2018) stated that taste, smell, visual, and auditory senses are the most effective sensory marketing elements in certain businesses like fast food chain restaurants. Helmefalk (2019) and Hussain (2018) added that in order to create an immersive experience using sensory marketing, businesses should carefully consider which cues to use to be able to correlate the senses into the experience and identity of the business. Moreover, Rehman et al. (2021) stated that the sensory marketing approach is particularly relevant in the hospitality, retail, and food industries, where the emotional and physical experience is essential to consumers. The following discussion will deal with each sense and its definition.

Sight

Admiring beauty, analyzing visuals, reading stories, and watching movies can never be done without the sense of sight. Chen et al. (2021) defined vision as the primary sense in humans. Lee and Jang (2019) agreed that visual marketing highlights the colors, shapes, displays, logos, and other elements. Visual marketing is a key factor in identifying any brand and distinguishing it and other competitors. Adding to that, Fong et al. (2023) highlighted that social media platforms are heavy users of this technique as social media relies a lot on what people see, as nowadays people spend a lot of their time on social media which in turn leads to a great opportunity for brands to advertise on social media platforms. Rehman et al. (2021) recommended that hospitality industries use rounded shapes in decorating and furniture, as it is preferred in packaging. As well, Oduguwa (2015) confirmed that branding materials and logos are carefully created to show the company's values and identity visually. An aesthetically pleasing and recognizable logo can contribute to positive associations. For example, Coca-Cola's "Share a Coke" campaign encouraged consumers to look for bottles with names of loved ones or themselves, which created an emotional connection between the consumer and the brand via eyesight.

Smell

One form of sensory marketing that is often used is smell marketing; it is a marketing technique that is used by many businesses in different sectors as perfume & scent industry, cosmetics and food & beverage industry through using aromas and fragrances in order to create a positive response from the consumer (Chen et al., 2021). Botelho and De Luca (2021) added that the motive behind using smell marketing is that certain aromas may trigger a certain part of the brain that leads to memories and emotions that push the customer to their purchasing decision. Furthermore, Botelho and De Luca, 2021; and Henshaw (2016) noted that there are certain dimensions that shape odors, like presence which is being surrounded in the environment by a certain smell, and congruence which is described as having a scent in the environment that is appropriate for the place or situation that the consumer is in. Intensity, which is defined as how powerful the scent is, valence, which is the change from an unpleasant scent to a pleasant one, pleasantness, which is how effective the quality of the smell truly is, and arousal, which is the scent getting a physiological response from the customer.

Sound

Sensory marketing also uses auditory marketing. As stated by Koopman, Mbatha, and Chuchu (2023), it is constantly used to dramatize and enhance an idea or communication. Petit et al. (2019) proved that music has the ability to change how the customer can comprehend the information of the brand, since the consumer's mood and behavior can be affected by auditory marketing. Accordingly, music can be used in order to extract certain emotional responses from customers. Fong et al. (2023) argued

that the most important part of auditory marketing was the music tempo, as every business differs from another; different tempos are required in order to match the vibe of the business. Thus, in the fast-food industry, a slow tempo should be avoided at all costs if their aim is to get the customers to eat faster. On the other hand, the music tempo should be slowed down in order to lessen the impatience of the customers in the waiting line. Moreover, having the customer spend more time in the store is going to allow him to fully explore all the items inside, and it would attract more people to enter the store as they see that it is crowded, so they get an impression that this store may actually be good to have all these customers in it.

Taste

Selling something that genuinely tastes good immediately gives a competitive advantage for the company since customers will keep talking about it and spreading good word of mouth about the brand. Fong et al. (2023) declared that a huge part that determines the experience of eating in a restaurant is the taste of the food. The part of the brain that controls pleasure is stimulated when the food the consumer tastes is good. Memories that last for a lifetime can be induced by the sense of taste. Chen et al. (2021) confirmed that a certain taste can bring back positive memories to a customer or build positive emotion toward the brand; if used correctly, it can have a lasting effect, which in turn can lead to a loyal customer. Fong et al. (2023) found that taste is affected by the posture of the consumer, as the customer can have a better-tasting experience whilst sitting down rather than standing up. Nwachukwu et al. (2022) found that the food and beverage sector has made special labs that are used in order to create new tastes and new trends that are tested for the consumers. Campo, Rosato, and Giagnacovo (2020) highlighted the significant role of investing in research and development to come up with flavors that can relate to their target audience to maintain a competitive advantage.

Touch

Physical interaction with the product is what the touch sense entails (Fong et al., 2023). Chen et al. (2021) noted that the sense of touch endures more than any other sense. According to Fong et al. (2023), mental stimulation can happen through a tactile experience, as people believe that the essence of a product can be transferable to another product via touching, according to the laws of sympathetic magic and the laws of contagion. Moving on, companies should now create a user-friendly interface so that it can be easier for everyone to use. On the other side, Sayed (2023) declared that for some customers, the interaction with the product is a way of making sure of the quality of the product. The physical experience of interacting with a product, whether it's the smoothness of a skincare product, the texture of clothing, or the feel of a smartphone, contributes to the consumer experience.

Brand Loyalty

Singh and Keltz (2020) stated that in the late 90s, brand loyalty was defined as only the consumer being committed to buying their favorite product or service, which causes them to buy the same product from the same brand, whilst ignoring outside efforts that are made by other businesses. Then, Cuong (2020) declared that nowadays, brand loyalty can be seen as brand allegiance, which is being loyal to the brand for a long time. Cuong (2020) and Hussain et al. (2023) highlighted that brand loyalty is not just about the customer repurchasing from a certain brand or certain product, but is the psychological attachment towards that brand and the willingness not to buy from any other brand. It was shown that brand loyalty not only increases sales but can also lead to new clients due to recommendations from other loyal customers. Both Mostafa and Kasamani (2021) and Ishak and Abd Ghani (2013) agreed that brand loyalty is a valuable asset for companies, as it often leads to increased customer lifetime value, long-term customer relationships, and a competitive advantage in the market. Building and maintaining brand loyalty requires a full approach that focuses on customer experience, emotional connection, and ongoing engagement with the target audience.

Sensory Marketing and Brand Loyalty

Sensory marketing, which engages people's senses to create emotional connections with products and brands, can have a significant impact on brand loyalty (Hussain, 2018). As stated by Riza and Wijayanti (2018), sensory marketing creates an emotional and multi-dimensional resonant brand experience that goes beyond mere functional attributes, by appealing to the senses, brands can create a unique identity, establish positive emotions, and have a lasting connection that relates to increased brand loyalty over time. Therefore, it's hypothesized that sensory marketing and brand loyalty have a significant positive relationship. Further, Iqbal (2016) declared that the five senses need to be observed in correlation to the world, as it increases the emotional attachment that will enhance customer loyalty towards the brand. Thus:

H1: Sensory marketing impacts brand loyalty.

Mediating Role of Customer Experience

Customer experience is defined by Holmlund et al. (2020) as the time period before, during, or after the purchase of a product or service and the consumer's response to it over time and over multiple channels. Further, Shahid et al. (2022) defined customer experience through the consumer's personal subjective experience that blends a mixture of emotions and personal memories. Whereas, Becker and Jaakkola (2020) stated that customer experience is all about leaving a lasting impression in the minds of consumers in order to give them the best experience in a competitive environment. Gentile, Spiller, and Noci (2007) highlighted that a successful consumer experience strategy involves understanding customer expectations and needs, aligning internal processes to deliver on those expectations, and always improving and measuring the various touch points along the customer journey. Companies that invest in and prioritize delivering amazing customer experiences often benefit from increased customer loyalty, sustainable business growth, and positive brand perception. Therefore, a positive consumer experience is important for differentiating a brand in a competitive market, fostering positive word-of-mouth, and finally in building brand loyalty.

Sensory Marketing and Consumer Experience

Mostafa and Kasamani (2020), argued that companies most of the time use cost-saving in order to try and achieve brand loyalty and they do so by using coupons, discounts, and better treatment for memberships, but those strategies only work in the short term, yet they are not as effective in building brand loyalty. In order to trigger excitement and enthusiasm within the consumer, brands must have a good consumer experience strategy so that the customers will have the urge to revisit the brand in the future, and be more likely to repurchase (Mostafa &Kasamani, 2020). Jang and Lee (2019) added that tactical product design, appealing visuals, or pleasant scents can make consumers perceive a product as more desirable, luxurious, or high-quality, which would enhance the consumers' experience in the end. Zha et al. (2022) and Agapito, Pinto, and Mendes (2012) agreed that sensory marketing enhances customer experience by creating emotionally resonant, memorable experiences. From the previous, it's hypothesized that:

H2: Sensory marketing impacts customer experience.

Consumer Experience and Brand Loyalty

According to Shahid et al. (2022), the five senses capture the impact of the consumer experience due to technological advancements made in the retail sector. Fong et al. (2023) added that a consumer's dining experience can be heavily affected by the taste of the food and the aroma of the restaurant as the brain correlates pleasure with good taste and auditory sense as well, the music goes a long way in either enhancing or ruining the consumer experience for the customer as picking the wrong music choice in a certain business can ruin the whole experience or if the business is too noisy and crowded,

consumers can feel like they are suffocated and would prefer if they were at more quiet space. Moreover, Fong et al. (2023) argued that the touch experience for the consumer is very important, especially when it comes to hospitality businesses, as companies that can provide a better haptic experience for the customer. Customer feedback could lead to constant addressing of points, improvement, and enhancement of the overall experience, which in turn fosters loyalty. Zhao et al. (2017) confirmed that a positive customer experience is a key component of brand loyalty. It involves creating personalized, emotional, and consistent deep interactions across all touchpoints, since when customers feel satisfied, understood, and valued throughout their journey, they are more likely to develop a strong emotional tie to the brand, resulting in sustained loyalty. Based on the above, it's hypothesized that:

H3: Customer experience impacts brand loyalty.
H4: Customer experience mediates the relationship between sensory marketing and brand loyalty.

Research Problem

In the face of rising inflation in Egypt, coffee shops must establish a strong competitive advantage to sustain their business. One of the most effective ways to achieve this is by enhancing the customer experience, as a positive experience fosters customer loyalty. Retaining loyal customers not only reduces the costs associated with acquiring new ones through advertising but also strengthens a café's position in an increasingly competitive market. A key component of creating a compelling customer experience is sensory marketing, which engages consumers' senses to build a strong brand connection. By strategically incorporating sensory elements such as ambiance, aroma, music, and product presentation, coffee shops can enhance the overall brand experience and influence brand loyalty. However, the absence of a well-crafted sensory experience can result in weak customer engagement, negative reviews, and, ultimately, brand switching. Poor experiences often lead dissatisfied customers to seek alternatives, damaging the business's reputation and profitability. Given these challenges, this study aims to examine the impact of sensory marketing on brand loyalty, with customer experience as a mediating factor.
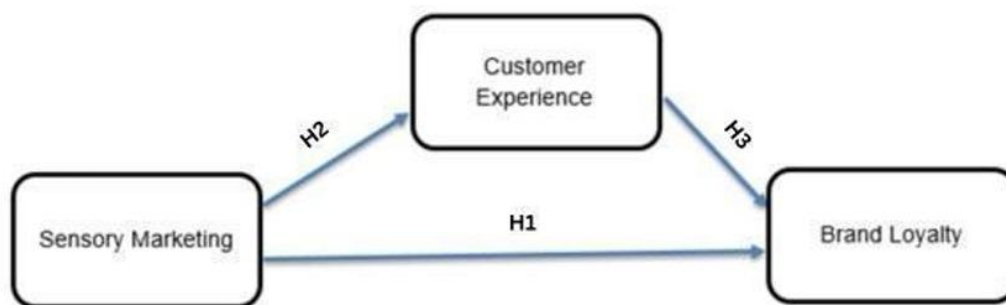
Conceptual Model

Figure 1: Conceptual model

Research Methodology

This study employs a descriptive conclusive research design. Primary and secondary data sources were utilized to enhance the validity of the study. An observation and content analysis were conducted by the researchers allowed for an initial understanding of key sensory marketing elements. In the main part, which is the quantitative phase, the questionnaire consisted of validated measurement scales adapted from prior literature as displayed in Table (1), utilizing a five-point Likert scale. The study

targeted customers with prior exposure to sensory marketing within the café industry. A non-probability convenience sampling technique was employed to the access of respondents with a sample size of 211 valid responses, reflecting a response rate of 54.9%. Data collection was conducted using an online survey distributed via social media platforms and QR codes, ensuring a broad and diverse reach. Prior to full-scale data collection, a pilot study was conducted with 30 respondents to assess clarity, reliability, and instrument validity. Based on the pilot results, minor refinements were made to enhance comprehension. Additionally, SEM was employed to test the proposed hypotheses, while Spearman's rho correlation analysis was used to assess associations between key variables. Reliability was confirmed through Cronbach's alpha, ensuring internal consistency, while validity tests were conducted to establish measurement robustness. Mediation analysis was performed using bootstrapping techniques on SmartPLS to determine the indirect effects of customer experience on brand loyalty.

Statistical Results

Table (2), the frequency table, shows that the total number of respondents was 211, 40.3% of whom were males, while 59.7% were females. The frequency of age showed that the people who go to cafés the most their age range from 20- to 26-year-olds, with a percentage of 71.1%. This has shown that this age range is the ones that go to cafés most often over any other age range. This is due to the fact that people at this age are either finishing college or have just finished and are in a premarital phase. The occupation frequency has shown that unemployed people are the people who go to cafes the most, with a percentage of 66.8%. This has shown that people who have more free time and are not tied to a working schedule are more likely to go to cafés than to any other occupation. This happened because unemployed people have a lot freer time than those who are in the workforce, which means that they are more likely to spend their time in cafes. Further, it has been shown from Table (2) that the people who visit cafés most often, visit 2 times a month or more, with a percentage of 75.8%. This can indicate that people tend to visit cafes more than once a month due to having the luxury of free time, as well as the nature of the Egyptian population, who go out frequently.

Table (3) reflects the reliability and validity test. It demonstrates the results of the reliability test using Cronbach's alpha and Composite reliability, whose cut-off value should be 0.7 or higher to indicate adequate convergence or internal consistency. Accordingly, all statements measuring each of the constructs were found to be reliable. Further, to ensure that all the statements are appropriate and tend to measure the exact variable, the validity test was conducted through the AVE; it has shown that all statements are valid because the AVE values are above 0.5. Furthermore, Table (4) presents the results of hypotheses testing, revealing significant relationships among the studied variables. The correlation coefficient between sensory marketing and brand loyalty (H1) is 0.319, indicating a weak positive relationship, yet it remains statistically significant ($p < 0.01$). For (H2), the correlation between sensory marketing and customer experience is 0.522, demonstrating a moderate positive relationship, which is also statistically significant ($p < 0.01$). Similarly, (H3) shows that customer experience and brand loyalty share a moderate positive relationship, with a correlation coefficient of 0.518 and a statistically significant p-value below 0.01. Further, the results for (H4) examine the relationship between sensory marketing and brand loyalty through the mediator variable of customer experience. The correlation analysis reveals a p-value of 0.617, indicating that the relationship is non-significant without mediation. This suggests that sensory marketing alone does not have a direct impact on brand loyalty. Instead, the effect of sensory marketing on brand loyalty occurs entirely through customer experience, confirming the presence of complete mediation.

Moreover, as displayed in Table (5), the R-squared value serves as a goodness-of-fit measure for the linear regression model, indicating the proportion of variance in the dependent variable that is explained by the independent variable. In this study, the adjusted R-squared for customer experience

is 0.383, meaning that sensory marketing accounts for 38% of the variability in customer experience. Additionally, the combined effect of sensory marketing and customer experience explains 42% of the variability in brand loyalty. According to Ozili (2023), an R-squared value above 0.13 is considered moderate, while a value exceeding 0.26 is substantial, confirming that the model provides a strong explanatory power for the relationships under investigation.

Discussion

The findings of this study provide critical insights into the role of sensory marketing in shaping customer experience and brand loyalty. Unlike previous literature that suggests a direct effect of sensory marketing on brand loyalty, the results of this research reveal a more nuanced relationship. The data indicate that sensory marketing does not directly enhance brand loyalty; rather, its impact is fully mediated by customer experience. This finding underscores the need for firms to prioritize experiential strategies when deploying sensory marketing interventions.

Regarding (H1): *"Sensory marketing impacts brand loyalty"*, prior studies, such as Iqbal (2016), highlight that sensory marketing fosters brand loyalty by creating emotional attachments between consumers and brands rather than relying solely on product benefits. Similarly, Hussain (2018) asserts that a pleasurable sensory environment contributes to better customer experience and overall brand loyalty. Sensory stimuli such as ambient music, scent, and tactile experiences can shape positive consumer perceptions and long-term brand associations. However, findings from this study reveal a weak but significant positive correlation between sensory marketing and brand loyalty when analyzed using Spearman's rank correlation. More notably, SEM indicates that sensory marketing does not exert a direct effect on brand loyalty in the absence of customer experience as a mediating variable. This finding diverges from previous literature, suggesting that this is due to people having different priorities when it comes to which sense they want to satisfy. So, a café could focus on all sensory marketing elements yet not be able to make the customers loyal to their brand, as they may find another café that focuses on the senses they prefer more than their brand, unless they have a good experience in the café.

Further, the results of (H2): *"Sensory marketing impacts customer experience"*, the literature extensively supports the role of sensory marketing in enhancing customer experience. Jang and Lee (2019) examine how sensory elements significantly affect consumer perceptions, emotions, and interactions with brands. Similarly, Agapito, Pinto, and Mendes (2012) posit that a well-designed sensory marketing strategy enhances engagement and strengthens brand identity by appealing to multiple senses. The results of this study align with these findings, demonstrating a strong and significant positive relationship between sensory marketing and customer experience. The SEM results validate that sensory marketing positively influences customer experience, reinforcing the argument that sensory stimuli create immersive and memorable consumer interactions. These results indicate that brands seeking to improve customer experience should invest in multi-sensory engagement strategies to establish a strong emotional connection with consumers. The study validates the notion that a well-designed multisensory environment fosters positive customer experiences, ultimately influencing behavioral responses. These findings are consistent with prior research suggesting that sensory marketing enhances customer experience.

Moreover, the findings of (H3): *"Customer experience impacts brand loyalty"*, customer experience is identified as a key driver of brand loyalty. The study's results demonstrate that an enriched customer experience fosters stronger brand attachment, repeat patronage, and advocacy. Consumers who engage in positively reinforced sensory experiences exhibit higher levels of brand loyalty, as they associate pleasurable experiences with the brand. Moreover, this can be explained since when a person visits a place and every time gets a pleasant experience, this would eventually lead them to be loyal to that

specific brand, as they always get a good experience from visiting the brand.

As for the finding of (H4): *"Customer experience mediates the relationship between sensory marketing and brand loyalty"*, a central contribution of this research is the identification of customer experience as a full mediator between sensory marketing and brand loyalty. The results challenge the assumption that sensory marketing alone can secure long-term customer commitment. Instead, the study provides empirical evidence that sensory strategies must be integrated into the broader customer journey to generate sustainable loyalty. This insight has profound managerial implications, suggesting that businesses should not merely focus on sensory enhancements but also curate holistic and immersive brand experiences that maximize consumer loyalty.

Conclusion

Sensory marketing has emerged as a pivotal strategic tool, leveraging the five human senses to enhance customer experiences and foster brand loyalty. This study rigorously examined the impact of sensory marketing on brand loyalty, with customer experience acting as a mediating variable within the context of the café industry. The research was grounded in an extensive literature review, drawing upon a wealth of academic sources that provided theoretical and empirical insights into sensory marketing, brand loyalty, and customer experience. Furthermore, the study incorporated self-concept and self-verification theories, enriching the conceptual framework and guiding the formulation of research hypotheses.

By integrating insights from literature and exploratory research, the study developed a comprehensive methodology, with a primary focus on a quantitative approach. Data collected from 211 respondents were analyzed using SmartPLS, confirming that sensory marketing positively influences brand loyalty through customer experience as a mediating variable. The findings of this study offer significant implications for the café industry. The results substantiate the critical role of sensory marketing in enhancing customer experience, which in turn drives brand loyalty. These insights provide actionable strategies for café owners seeking to differentiate their establishments in an intensely competitive market. By strategically integrating sensory marketing elements such as ambient scents, tactile comfort, auditory stimulation, and visual aesthetics, businesses can craft immersive experiences that foster long-term customer relationships and strengthen brand loyalty.

Managerial Implications

Based on the results of this research, it is recommended that marketing managers at cafes implement the following to create a unique sensory experience in order to create a good customer experience.

Recommendation Category	Proposed Implications	Expected Strategic Benefits
Enhancing Customer Experience	Trained staff on customer service, accuracy, and speed in order fulfillment.	Improved service quality, leading to higher customer loyalty.
	Implement digital ordering and payment systems via QR codes or mobile apps.	Enhanced convenience and reduced wait times lead to a seamless experience.
	Introduce an electronic loyalty card instead of paper-based stamping.	Increase repeat visits.
	Allow drink customization, including coffee blends, juices, and soda-infused drinks.	Personalization enhances customer attachment to the brand.
	Offer seasonal specialty drinks and decorations for holidays.	Creates excitement and a festive atmosphere, encouraging more visits.
	Obtain an Egyptian Quality Control certificate and display it prominently.	Builds trust and credibility by assuring customers of high-quality products.
Enhancing Sensory Marketing	**Sight**: Use warm, dim lighting, aesthetically pleasing decorations, and simple, elegant colors.	Creates a visually comforting atmosphere that attracts and retains customers.
	Smell: Maintain the aroma of fresh coffee beans and baked goods throughout the café.	Enhancing sensory pleasure, making customers associate the café with a pleasant experience.
	Sound: Play trendy, soothing music at a moderate volume; use soundproofing materials to minimize noise.	Balances ambiance for socializing and working/studying without distractions.
	Taste: Use high-quality coffee beans and innovative drink options with premium ingredients.	Ensures product excellence, making customers return for the taste.
	Touch: Invest in comfortable seating, high-quality tableware, and ergonomic furniture.	Encourages longer visits, enhancing customer experience and satisfaction.

Limitations and Future Research Suggestions

While this study provides valuable insights, it is subject to certain limitations. The research was conducted within the café industry, which may limit generalizability across different sectors. Future studies should explore the role of sensory marketing in other service domains such as hospitality, retail, and luxury branding. Additionally, further research should investigate cross-cultural variations in sensory marketing effectiveness to develop globally applicable frameworks. Expanding the methodology to include longitudinal studies and experimental designs could provide deeper insights into the causal mechanisms underlying sensory-driven brand loyalty.

Originality of the Research

This research makes significant contributions to both academic literature and practical applications in the field of sensory marketing and consumer behavior. Unlike previous studies that primarily focus on isolated sensory elements, this research adopts a holistic approach, examining the combined effects of multiple sensory stimuli on brand loyalty with the mediating role of customer experience. From a managerial perspective, the findings provide actionable insights for businesses in the restaurant and café industry, emphasizing the importance of strategically designed multi-sensory experiences to enhance customer experience and build brand loyalty.

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Table 1: Table of measurements

Variables		Measurements	Sources
Sensory Marketing	**Sense**	The café appeals to my senses.	Han et al. (2019)
	Sight	The colors of the café are pleasing to the eye.	Jang and Lee (2019) & Han et al. (2019)
		The lighting of the café is suitable for studying/working/reading.	
		The interior of the café looks stylish.	
	Smell	The café's aroma matches the atmosphere.	Jang and Lee (2019) & Han et al. (2019)
		The air inside the café is well ventilated.	
		The smell of the coffee soothes me.	
		I like the smell of the café.	
		The smell of the café's food stimulates the appetite.	
	Sound	The tempo of the music is suitable for the Café.	Jang and Lee (2019) & Han et al. (2019)
		The noise in the café is bearable.	
		The volume of music in the café is appropriate.	
	Touch	The interior furniture in the café's is comfortable.	Kim et al. (2020) & Jang and Lee (2019)
		The bathroom of the café is clean.	
		The texture of the café's materials is of high quality.	
		The exterior furniture in the café is comfortable.	
		The tableware (cups, utensils, plates, etc.) of the café is clean.	
	Taste	The ingredients in the food are fresh.	Jang and Lee (2019)
		The ingredients of the coffee are fresh.	
		The taste of the coffee is strong.	
		The variety in drinks is sufficient.	
		The variety in food is sufficient.	
Customer Experience		I enjoy spending time with friends at the café.	Ameen et al. (2021) & Han et al. (2019)
		I often do work/study at the café.	
		I feel happy when I visit the café.	
		I feel energetic when I visit the café.	
		I enjoy interacting with the staff of the café.	
Brand loyalty		The café has personal meaning for me	Ameen et al. (2021) & Han et al. (2019)
		I intend to visit the café continuously	
		I'll never switch to another café.	

Table 2: Characteristics of the Sample

Characteristics:	Percentage
Gender	
Female	59.7%
Male	40.3%
Age	
13-19	25.1%
20-26	71.1%
27-33	2.8%
34-40	1%
Occupation	
Business Owner	5.2%
Private Sector	24.6%
Public Sector	3.4%
Unemployed	66.8%
How often do you visit cafes?	
4 or more times a month	34.1%
2-3 times a month	41.7%
Once a month	24.2%

Table 3: Reliability and Validity Test

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Brand Loyalty	0.776	0.869	0.689
Customer Experience	0.786	0.857	0.553
Sensory Marketing	0.909	0.923	0.503

Table 4: Table of Path Coefficients

	Hypotheses	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P Values
H1	Sensory Marketing Impacts Brand Loyalty.	0.039	0.041	0..077	0.501	0.617
H2	Sensory Marketing Impacts Customer Experience.	0.621	0.628	0.052	11.963	0
H3	Customer Experience Impacts Brand Loyalty	0.626	0.63	0.068	9.18	0
Mediating Effect						
		Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P Values
H4	Customer experience mediates the relationship between sensory marketing and brand loyalty.	0.389	0.396	0.057	6.817	0

Table 5: Model Evaluation

Variables	R Square
Customer Experience	0.386
Brand Loyalty	0.423