Mediating Customer Experience in the Relationship between Sensory Marketing and Repurchase Intention: An Applied study on fast food customers

Dr. Basma Tawfik Ahmed

Lecturer of Business Administration

Faculty of Business – Horus University Egypt

btawfik@horus.edu.eg

Dr. Mohamed Ahmed Shemies

Lecturer of Business Administration

Raya High Institute for Management and Foreign Trade, New Damietta city

mohamedshemeis14@gmail.com

Abstract:

The present research sought to examine both the direct and indirect influences of sensory marketing on customers repurchase intentions, with customer experience serving as a mediating variable. The research targeted Egyptian customers who frequent leading fast-food chains—such as KFC, Pizza Hut, McDonald's, Burger King, Hardees, and Tikka by distributing the questionnaire via social media platforms. A non-probability snowball sampling technique was employed, resulting in a final sample of 384 respondents. To collect data, the researchers developed a structured electronic questionnaire tailored to the study objectives. Data analysis involved descriptive statistics using SPSS version 26, while hypothesis testing was conducted using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) via AMOS version 24.

The findings revealed that sensory marketing exerts a statistically significant influence on repurchase intention, as well as on customer experience. Furthermore, customer experience was found to have a significant and positive impact on repurchase intention. Regarding the indirect pathways, the analysis confirmed that customer experience plays a mediating role in the relationship between sensory marketing and repurchase intention. Consequently, all proposed hypotheses were empirically supported. This research provides practical and theoretical implications for marketers in the fast-food industry.

Keywords: Sensory Marketing, Customer Experience, Repurchase Intention.

Introduction:

Marketers are constantly looking for creative ways to grab consumers' attention, arouse favourable feelings, and eventually influence purchasing behaviour in today's fiercely competitive marketplace, where consumers are presented with a plethora of options. Sensory marketing is one such tactic that has become very popular in recent years. The five senses of consumers—sight, hearing, touch, taste, and smell—are used in sensory marketing to produce compelling brand experiences that affect consumers' opinions, choices, and actions. The idea that customer reactions are significantly influenced by sensory cues is not new. However, the intentional and planned use of these sensory clues to create engaging brand narratives, improve product experiences, and establish deeper emotional bonds with customers is what sets sensory marketing apart (Tartaraj & Horska, 2023; 199).

Our senses play a crucial role in shaping our daily experiences and interactions with the world. From visual news to the scent of coffee, our sensory experiences shape our mental images of these situations. Our senses of sight, touch, smell, hearing, and smell help explain and express our emotions, illustrating how we perceive life. Our choice of words reflects how we experienced these situations using our senses, allowing us to create a vivid mental picture of our experiences. Thus, our senses play a crucial role in shaping our perception of life (Nertsberg & Hansson, 2024; 455).

Individual differences in the organizational structure of memory result from the uniqueness of each person's field of experience. The distinct ways that people interpret their environment are expressed by this perception. Knowledge, emotions, sentiments, signs, symbols, and gestures are all components of an individual's field of experience throughout their lives (Kitchen & Tourky, 2021; 72). Combining sensory experiences with people's personalities results in emotional experiences that help people build memories, increasing the experience's total value (Buckley et al, 2022; 2). Experiences from the five senses—vision, hearing, touch, smell, and taste—are included in the sensory dimension.

Customers are more inclined to make repeat purchases from a firm when they have a positive experience. Customers who show an interest in returning items or purchasing additional items from a business are said to have repurchase intention. One of the numerous elements that can affect a customer's propensity to make additional purchases is a memorable shopping experience. The customer experience is the

interaction between customers who are first unheard of by a business, turn into new purchases, and ultimately become loyal customers. Studies have indicated that customer experience has an impact on repurchase intention (Adela & Tuti, 2024; 107).

One of the most pervasive sectors in the world is the fast-food sector. In Egypt, there are 60% foreign franchises and 40% local franchises, with American brands accounting for 30% of the international franchises. According to estimates, franchisees in Egypt account for about 30% of franchise revenues. Even though the fast-food sector is very competitive, restaurateurs employ a variety of strategies to increase their market share while providing a welcoming atmosphere for their patrons (Sayed, 2023; 163). Therefore, the goal of the current study is to investigate the direct and indirect effects of sensory marketing on repurchase intention for fast food customers by mediating customer experience.

Theorical Background:

Sensory Marketing:

When individuals are exposed to external stimuli in a certain environment, their visual, auditory, and tactile perceptions of the event are affected. This is referred to as sense (Kim et al., 2020; 524).

Conventional marketing strategies only targeted visual communication and customer attraction. That was the cause of businesses' downfalls and poorer performance. Conventional marketing approaches have been updated to emphasise the need to build enduring relationships with clients through innovative advertising, unique communication, and other marketing strategies rather than just acquiring new ones. Sensory marketing is a new technique for attracting customers' attention that appeals to their five senses, which influences their behaviour, perception, and purchasing decisions (Satti et al., 2021; 724).

Marketing professionals utilise sensory marketing as a technique to boost company performance and provide noticeable outcomes. Accordingly, sensory marketing refers to marketing strategies that aim to attract customers by influencing their emotions and actions via the use of their senses. By stimulating the client's senses, delivering information to the right part of the brain, and finally establishing a connection between the consumer and the products, sensory marketing aims to persuade him to make a purchase. Humans drive emotions and draw conclusions based on
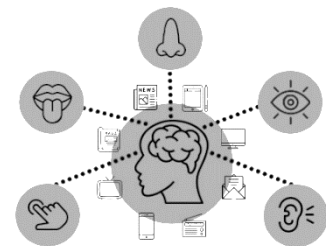
reason, which is a critical distinction between sentiments and causes (Shehata & Alaswadi, 2022; 115).

Additionally, sensory marketing is described as a commercial strategy that stems from experiences made possible by the five human senses—taste, smell, hearing, vision, and touch. The signals that people get from the outside world are used as resources for their information processing through these modalities. After processing, the data is saved in memory for later access (Fong et al., 2023; 2919). The American Marketing Association defines sensory marketing as marketing strategies that use the senses to entice consumers and affect their emotions and actions (Dusauw et al., 2023; 140).

The five senses that comprise human perception—taste, smell, hearing, vision, and touch—are the foundation of sensory marketing, according to Fong et al. (2023; 2920). People use signals from the outside world as resources for their information processing when they are available through a variety of modalities. Sensory marketing can provide ingrained cues that affect consumers' perceptions of a product's abstract features, such its complexity. Given the abundance of marketing initiatives that consumers are exposed to on a daily basis, conscious triggers that play on their basic emotions might be a more effective method of engaging them.

By appealing to a variety of senses, including taste, sight, and hearing, sensory marketing gives consumers a remarkable sensory experience. As a result, sensory marketing may be more successful than relationship or mass marketing, which can further affect people's behaviour and group experiences through the use of multifaceted communication channels (Tekin & Kanat, 2023; 316). As a result, companies in a range of sectors, such as tourism, hospitality, and dining establishments, can effectively market their products and services through sensory marketing (Fong et al., 2023; 2920).

The primary advantage of sensory marketing is its broad scope, which enables marketers to select strategies according to their potential impact on consumers. A cohesive and enticing retail atmosphere is created by allowing customers to freely touch things, playing music or other sounds, distributing scents, and having a well-executed design. There are several ways to excite each sensation, which affects how consumers act (Singhal & Khare, 2015; 3).

Yang (2023; 130) discovered that its consumers' sensory experiences served as an affirmative trigger. Targeting the auditory senses is

demonstrated by the fact that music is also regarded as a crucial element for generating positive reactions and building a brand image. By mediating historical nostalgia or mental imagery of the location, it might further develop and improve a destination's image (Fan et al., 2023; 4). Restaurants can enhance the eating experience for their patrons by implementing a sensory marketing approach. Customer satisfaction tends to rise for restaurant managers who use sensory marketing (Satti et al., 2021; 1). Kim et al. (2020) assert that sensory marketing boosts customer satisfaction, which in turn fosters loyalty (Satti et al., 2022; 719).

By fostering emotional connections, restaurants can use sensory marketing to boost customer happiness (Shahid et al., 2022; 1399). It is noteworthy that sensory marketing outperforms traditional marketing in terms of increasing customer satisfaction and enticing customers to stay longer at a restaurant (Satti et al., 2021, 2022; 719, 1). The five sensory components that form the foundation for generating cognitive and affective impressions influence the dining experiences of patrons at specific restaurants (Chen et al., 2021; 3). Restaurants use sensory marketing to make sure customers are aware of the services they are offering and to guarantee a positive dining experience (Satti et al., 2021; 721).

To improve client happiness, restaurants should concentrate on keeping their spaces tidy and offering attentive service. It is thought that including aesthetic stimulation into a restaurant's offerings improves patrons' emotional attachment and contentment (Shahid et al., 2022; 1399). This approach should be taken into consideration by a conventional restaurant as a marketing tactic for controlling visual cues (Zha et al., 2022; 132).

Customer Experience:

Every interaction a consumer has with a company, from first awareness to after-purchase assistance, is included in the term "customer experience". Customer experience has become a key difference for businesses in recent years. Research indicates that companies who prioritise Customer experience outperform their rivals. Increased customer satisfaction, loyalty, and advocacy can result from a satisfying customer experience, which can eventually boost sales. Businesses must invest in improving the customer journey since it is much more expensive to acquire new consumers than it is to keep existing ones. Therefore, long-term success depends on comprehending and enhancing

Customer experience through focused tactics and tailored interactions (Boppiniti, 2022; 2).

A consumer's cognitive, emotional, behavioural, sensory, and social reactions to service delivery procedures are all characterised by the multifaceted idea of customer experience (Bawack et al., 2021; 3). Despite its complexity, Customer experience is an important and strategically relevant phenomenon. According to Chauhan et al. (2022; 313), it is an emotion, thought, behaviour, and experience triggered by brand-related cues during a customer-provider contact. In the current business-to-business (B2B) context, customer experience is a highly relevant competitive tool. 89% of businesses think that their primary competitive basis will be their customer experience, following a study by the global consulting firm Gartner (Cepeda-Carrion et al., 2023; 889).

Customer experience is the term used to describe the internal, subjective responses of customers to each direct or indirect engagement with the business. Businesses are more conscious of the importance of taking customers and users into account when developing new goods. Customers and users utilise various brand-provided goods, services, or systems, and each time they engage with them, they have an experience—whether good or bad. Their intention for future use is influenced by this experience (Quiñones & Rojas, 2023; 3). Notwithstanding these variations in description, the majority of writers concur that a consumer's highly subjective reaction to the stimulation of their senses by a brand or offering is what constitutes customer experience.

 Because motivational ideas (such involvement/engagement) assume a motivational state, Customer experience is different from them. Second, Customer experience encompasses the customer's whole buying path (Rather et al., 2021; 17).

 This further distinguishes trans-interaction Customer experience from intra-interaction Customer experience, as distinct sub-experiences may occur during an individual's pre-, intra, and post-interaction experience (Rather, 2020; 18). Over the years, a number of dimensions, characteristics, and/or elements have been put forth to comprehend and describe Customer experience. Schmitt (1999; 56) was among the first scholars to highlight the importance of Customer experience in the marketing field, where these dimensions first appeared. Schmitt introduced three main dimensions which is called (SEM) model: (1) feel, which is connected to the senses to produce sensory experiences; (2) think, which is linked to the intellect to generate experiences related to

cognition and problem-solving; (3) act, which focusses on the actual encounters of customers while including their activities and lives;

Additionally, a number of research offer dimensions based on Schmitt's suggestion. For example, Gentile et al. (2007) suggest six dimensions for Customer experience: cognitive, associated with deliberate mental operations and the capacity for creativity or problem-solving; relational, associated with relationships, the social environment, or one's ideal self; lifestyle, which is associated with values, beliefs, and the adoption of a particular way of living and behaving; sensory, pertaining to the five senses' sensory experience; emotional, referring to the sentiments and emotions evoked by a business and its offerings; and pragmatic, referring to the act of carrying out a practical task.
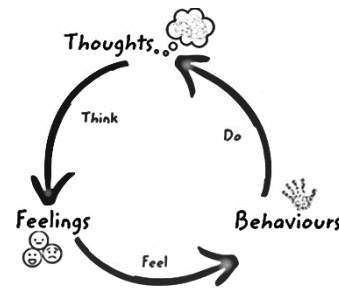
Because of their broad definition, the dimensions put forward by Gentile et al. (2007) can be used to a variety of fields. However, some authors suggest Customer experience dimensions in particular fields. For example, four dimensions for Customer experience in online communities are proposed by Nambisan & Watt (2011; 891): usability, hedonicity, sociability, and pragmatics. Shin et al. (2019; 531) offer four dimensions for Customer experience in banks in a different domain: utility; ease of use; interaction between employees and customers; and safety. According to Chatzoglou et al. (2022; 4), Customer experience has six dimensions: Physical setting; Shop interior design and layout; Staff-customer interaction; Customer-customer interaction; Merchandise value (quality); and Merchandise variety.

Experiences are brought on by coming across, going through, or experiencing particular circumstances. The Strategic Experiential Module (SEM) Schmitt (1999; 54), which managers can utilise to produce various kinds of client experiences, will be used in this study. Experiential marketing includes Experiences that are affective or emotional (FEEL), cognitively creative (THINK), or behavioural or physical (ACT).

Emotional (FEEL): In order to create affective experiences that range from modestly favourable moods associated with a brand to powerful sentiments of delight and pride, FEEL marketing plays on customers' inner feelings. To be successful, FEEL marketing requires a thorough comprehension of the factors that can elicit particular emotions. Since standard emotional communications do not focus on feelings during

consumption, they are deficient in both. Emotion-inducing stimuli and the willingness to empathise in a particular scenario vary from culture to culture, making it challenging to develop effective FEEL campaigns on a global basis.

Cognitive (THINK): With the goal of generating cognitive, problem-solving experiences that inspire creativity in consumers, THINK marketing plays to the intellect. Through surprise, mystery, and provocation, THINK appeals stimulate both divergent and convergent thinking in their target audience. THINK marketing are typical for products involving innovative technologies. Microsoft's "Where Do You Want to Go Today?" campaign serves as a prime illustration. However, THINK marketing isn't just for high-tech. In numerous other areas, THINK marketing has also been used to communications, retailing, and product creation.

Behavioural (ACT/DO): ACT marketing enhances consumers' lives by focussing on their physical experiences, presenting them with different approaches, there are numerous choices for changing behaviour, and rational approaches—that is, theories of reasoned actions—are just one of them. Lifestyle and behaviour changes are often emotive, inspirational, and motivating, and they often involve role models (such athletes or movie stars). Just Do It by Nike has become a staple of ACT marketing.

Repurchase Intention:

According to Sihombing et al. (2021; 6586), consumers who actively like and have a positive attitude towards a product or service based on past experiences are considered to have repurchase intention if they engage in the buy action regularly for a predetermined period of time after making their first purchase. Wu et al. (2020; 53) define repurchase intention as the evaluation of the likelihood that a customer would continue to buy products from the same supplier or that they will come back to buy products or services from the same company (Trivedi & Yadav, 2020; 402).

The consumer's intention to make another purchase from the same store in the future is known as their repurchase intention (Javed & Wu, 2020; 3). According to a different study, it is the likelihood that customers will keep using the same retailer for goods and services (Quan et al., 2020; 64). Because client repurchasing has a big impact on the success of electronic commerce, researchers also call it loyalty.

Following the purchase of goods or services, buyers intend to make additional purchases. After using the goods or services, the customer will want to buy more (Waruwu & Sianipar, 2021; 28).

Prior research has examined potential factors influencing customers' intentions to repurchase, mostly from the perspective of buyer relationships, identifying contentment and trust as two significant predictors. Positive effect from a satisfying shopping experience may inspire customers to write favourable evaluations. Due to the expensive cost of acquiring new customers and the financial value of keeping current, loyal customers, repurchases are both necessary and desirable. It costs five times as much to acquire new customers and establish a commercial relationship with them as it does to keep existing ones. High levels of satisfaction are necessary to maintain a positive customer relationship, which reduces switching costs and boosts customer trust and repurchase intent (Wu et al., 2020; 53).

repurchase intention is often treated as a unidimensional construct (e.g., "I intend to buy this again"), other studies conceptualised, assessed, and examined using a variety of theoretical models (Abumalloh et al., 2020) as a multidimensional construct, incorporating dimensions like revisit, recommend, and loyalty, likewise, trust is associated with consumers' positive intentions to buy goods or services, as well as their intentions to buy and repurchase (Javed & Wu, 2020).

Hellier et al (2003) Illustrates that satisfaction, brand preference, and perceived value influence repurchase intention, while Zeithaml et al. (1996) argued that repurchase intention is just one among numerous post-consumption behaviours and used the following dimensions positive referral or Word-of-mouth (WOM), Loyalty and willingness to pay more. Ryu, Han & Kim (2008) used two dimensions model including revisit intention and recommendation intention. Han & Ryu (2009) Demonstrated three dimensions' loyalty, revisit intention and positive WOM as distinct yet interrelated constructs in modelling behavioural intentions.

This study will utilise intention to revisit, willingness to recommend, and brand loyalty to measure repurchase intention.

Revisit intention refers to "a customer's likelihood to return to the same store, site, or provider, based on prior experience and satisfaction." Lin

& Lekhawipat (2014) it reflects satisfaction, brand preference, and perceived value.

Willingness to recommend refers to "The customer's likelihood to engage in positive word-of-mouth about a company based on satisfaction and relationship strength." (Wirtz & Chew ,2002). It is also "The degree to which a customer talks positively about and recommends a company or service to others." (Maxham, 2001).

Loyalty refers to the client's desire to keep doing business with the company or service provider. It displays dedication, contentment, and emotional ties. According to Oliver (1999), loyalty is defined as A strong desire to continuously purchase or return a favoured good or service in the future, even though external factors and promotional campaigns may lead to switching behaviour.

Literature review and hypotheses development:

Sensory Marketing and Repurchase Intention:

Perumal & Shaarih, (2021) used the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) model, to examine how sensory inputs such as scent, lighting, and background music influence emotional states and, in turn, repurchase intention. The study concluded that sensory marketing acts as a powerful environmental stimulus in shaping consumer behavior.

Sirirak et al., (2021) aimed to investigate how customers' happiness with the café industry in Chonburi province influences repurchasing through sensory experience marketing. Customers' happiness with Monchang Cafe was found to be strongly impacted by the sense experience marketing, sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch senses.

Srichaichanwong & Soontornthum, (2021) investigated how multisensory marketing affected consumers' intentions to repurchase plant-based proteins. Repurchase intention was the dependent variable, customer satisfaction was the mediating variable, and the sensations of taste, smell, and sight were the independent variables. The findings showed that smell, taste, and sight all had a considerable impact on consumer satisfaction, which in turn had a big impact on the intention to repurchase.

Dung et al., (2022) looked at how each sensory component of sensory marketing affects Hanoi residents' intentions to use Vietnam Airlines' services again. The findings showed that sensory marketing gas a significant effect on Vietnam Airlines' services reuse.

Luong et al., (2022) explored how sensory marketing influences repurchase intention among young Vietnamese consumers on e-commerce platforms. The findings revealed a significant positive impact of sensory marketing on repurchase intention. Moreover, trust, satisfaction, and word-of-mouth acted as mediators in enhancing this effect.

Utama (2022) sought to ascertain how sensory marketing affected consumer happiness and the food and beverage businesses' intention to return in Bandung, West Java, Indonesia. The study's findings demonstrated that sensory marketing mediated customer happiness by influencing the intention to return. The sensations of taste, touch, and sight were the most important sensory marketing factors.

Kamil et al., (2023) examined the relationship between sensory marketing and consumer repurchase intentions using satisfaction as the mediating variable. It has been demonstrated that consumers' intentions to make additional purchases are positively and significantly impacted by both sensory marketing and customer satisfaction. Furthermore, sensory marketing and repurchase intention are positively and significantly correlated, with satisfaction serving as a mediating factor.

H1: There is a positive significant effect of sensory marketing on repurchase intention.

Sensory Marketing and Customer Experience:

Hallgren & Mamusha, (2021) stated that using sensory marketing in a correct way could help companies to become memorable and give customers a better experience. Hamacher & Buchkremer, (2022) indicated that companies offer a brand-new quantitative method for evaluating the sensory elements of e-commerce websites. The Online Sensory Marketing Index (OSMI) is a helpful measure of the sensory output presented by text, pictures, and other media. Website designers and marketers can discuss sensory marketing components and associated topics thanks to the OSMI. As a result, websites could be made to improve their sensory appeal and address their shortcomings. which enables the development of sensory templates for a range of sectors. Based on a field study of 16 websites in the tech, automotive, fashion, and food sectors, they were able to comprehend sensory metrics for the auditory and visual aspects of websites with ease. They also provide a score to quantify the gustatory, olfactory, and haptic aspects of the online sensory consumer experience. Lastly, they recommend

industry-specific weighting of offline and online sensory characteristics. They thus look into quantifiable indicators of online sensory overload and depletion. Their assessment offers a practical method for figuring out a website's OSMI.

According to Nertsberg & Hansson (2024), this study uses an autoethnographic technique to investigate how sensory marketing influences consumer behaviour and perception in a luxuriant store, as well as the dynamic interactions within collaborative realms of value co-creation. The purpose of this study is to examine the potential competitive advantages of sensory marketing across the customer journey in the value co-creation process. By appealing to a range of senses, sensory marketing significantly enhances consumer experiences, according to the research. Stronger emotional ties, memorable brand experiences, and active interactions that evoke significant memories result in value co-creation. So that, the following hypothesis can be formulated:

H2: There is a positive significant effect of sensory marketing on Customer Experience.

Customer Experience and Repurchase Intention:

In the context of online apparel retailing, Nilsson & Wall (2017) sought to investigate the elements of online customer experience and evaluate their impact on satisfaction. Furthermore, the goal is to examine the connection between repurchase intention and satisfaction in this particular setting. Using a quantitative approach, a questionnaire based on prior research was created and given to a sample of respondents who were Swedish bachelor's and master's students. The results indicated that among six factors of online customer experience identified in clothing retailing (ease of use, interaction, security, fulfilment reliability, customer service, store offerings), the findings show that all apart from interaction are important factors in determining satisfaction, which in turn positively impact repurchase intention.

Pasharibu et al. (2018) looked into the connection between repurchase intention and customer experience. This study sought to determine how customer experience affected the desire to repurchase on Tokopedia, one of Indonesia's most popular e-commerce sites. This study used a quantitative approach with 200 participants. According to the study's findings, repurchase intention was positively impacted by customer experience variables such as sense, feel, act, and relate, while repurchase intention was unaffected by the variable think.

Kavitha and Haritha (2018) made an effort to investigate the consumer experience at several touch points in the telecom industry, such as customer service, billing, network, stores, and customer care, as well as their desire to repurchase. Additionally, it made an effort to investigate the usage patterns, preferences, and correlation between customer experience aspects and repurchase intention among Coimbatore district telecom subscribers. A systematic questionnaire was used to gather data from Coimbatore district telecom users, and correlation analysis was used for analysis. The findings show that telecom users are often hesitant to stick with a single service, and that repurchase intention was closely connected with network, service delivery, and shop experiences.

The goal of Mustikasari et al. (2021) was to investigate how customer satisfaction functions as a mediator between repurchase intention and customer experience in both offline and online retailers. Using regression linear analysis, this study examined the relationship between customer satisfaction and the following aspects of the customer experience: product, customer service, staff service, shopping environment, and shopping method. The findings showed that repurchase intention is significantly impacted by customer experience. Additionally, the results showed that customer satisfaction can operate as a mediator between customer experience and intention to repurchase.

Febriani & Ardani, (2021) aimed to clarify how repurchase intention is impacted by customer experience, usability, and trust. This study employs an associative design that takes a quantitative approach. The city of Denpasar was the site of this study. The findings indicated that repurchase intention is positively and significantly impacted by customer experience, positively and significantly impacted by ease of use, positively and significantly impacted by trust, and simultaneously impacted by customer experience, ease of use, and trust.

Tojiri & Sugiat, (2022) investigated how customer experience shapes repurchase intention for beverage outlets in Indonesia. Survey data analyzed with SPSS revealed that superior service quality, positive interpersonal interactions, and visual cues (e.g., drink appearance) positively and significantly influence customers' likelihood to repurchase.

The goal of this study is to identify the essential components of the live streaming shopping experience and how they affect customer satisfaction and repurchase intention (Qian, 2021). We'll also look at the model's underlying connections between repurchase intention, trust,

and customer satisfaction. The findings show that all eight of the hypotheses are supported.

Aldriyanti & Tjajaningsih, (2022) aimed to ascertain how customer experience and company image affect a customer's propensity to make another purchase. a method that employs the purposive sampling approach. The findings indicated that customer satisfaction is positively and significantly impacted by both corporate image and customer experience. Repurchase intention is unaffected by customer experience. Repurchase intention is positively and significantly impacted by a customer.

By mediating trust and customer pleasure, Anifa & Sanaji (2022) examined the impact of perceived usefulness, simplicity of use, and customer experience on repurchase intention. With a sample of 200 respondents, the study's population consists of Indonesians aged 17 to 50 who have used the virtual product trial option to buy cosmetics online. The findings demonstrated that perceived usefulness influences customer satisfaction, perceived ease of use influences trust, and customer satisfaction influences repurchase intention. Trust, however, has no bearing on the intention to repurchase. Additionally, through mediating customer pleasure, consumer experience influenced repurchase intention.

Lượng et al., (2022) tested direct and indirect effects of customer experience on repurchase intention via trust and satisfaction. The study used a sample of 572 Vietnamese online retail users. The results confirmed that experience directly enhances both trust and satisfaction, which in turn mediate the positive impact on repurchase intention.

Sari & Padmantyo, (2023) surveyed 223 skincare consumers to examine how customer experience influences repurchase intention, with customer engagement as a mediator. Using SEM-PLS, it demonstrated that positive experiences significantly enhance repurchase intention, and that engagement strengthens this effect. It emphasizes that fostering customer engagement (e.g., via social media or service interactions) can amplify the value of experience.

Amoako, (2023) examined the relationship between online innovation and repurchase intention in Ghana's hotel business is examined in this study via the lens of customer experience. The analysis's findings support the idea that customer experience influences repurchase intentions by showing that online innovation positively influences both repurchase intentions and customer satisfaction. Therefore, while

repurchase intentions are a result of online innovation, the degree of these intentions is dependent on the customer experience. Thus, in the hotel industry, the relationship between online innovation and repurchase intention is mediated by customer experience.

Using product quality as a moderating variable, Safari et al. (2024) investigated the effects of customer experience and brand image on repurchase intention. This study uses an exploratory methodology and is quantitative in nature. By providing questionnaires to all 300 students located around Indonesia who had used TikTok Shop for at least a month, this study employs secondary data. The findings demonstrated that customer repurchase intention is significantly impacted by brand image and customer experience. Therefore, the researchers can formulate the following hypothesis:

H3: There is a positive significant effect of Customer Experience on Repurchase Intention.

Customer experience as a mediator in the relationship between sensory marketing and repurchase intention:

The goal of this research is to determine whether customer experience mediates the relationship between sensory marketing and repurchase intention. Sensory marketing has been linked to a variety of outcomes, including customer experience (Nertsberg & Hansson, 2024) and repurchase intention (Utama, 2022). The studies (Amako, 2023, Safari et al., 2024) found that customer experience affect repurchase intention.

According to the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) model (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974), sensory stimuli (stimulus) affect internal states (organism), which in turn drive behavioral outcomes (response). In this framework, sensory marketing acts as the stimulus, customer experience as the organism, and repurchase intention as the behavioral response. Moreover, Baron and Kenny's (1986) classical mediation model provides a statistical basis for testing whether customer experience carries (i.e., mediates) the influence of sensory marketing on repurchase intention. If sensory marketing improves the customer experience, and that experience leads to higher repurchase intention, then mediation is present. Therefore, the researchers can formulate the following hypothesis:

H4: There is a positive significant effect of sensory marketing on repurchase intention by mediating Customer Experience.

The researchers created the following research framework, which is shown in Figure 1, based on the theoretical considerations mentioned above:
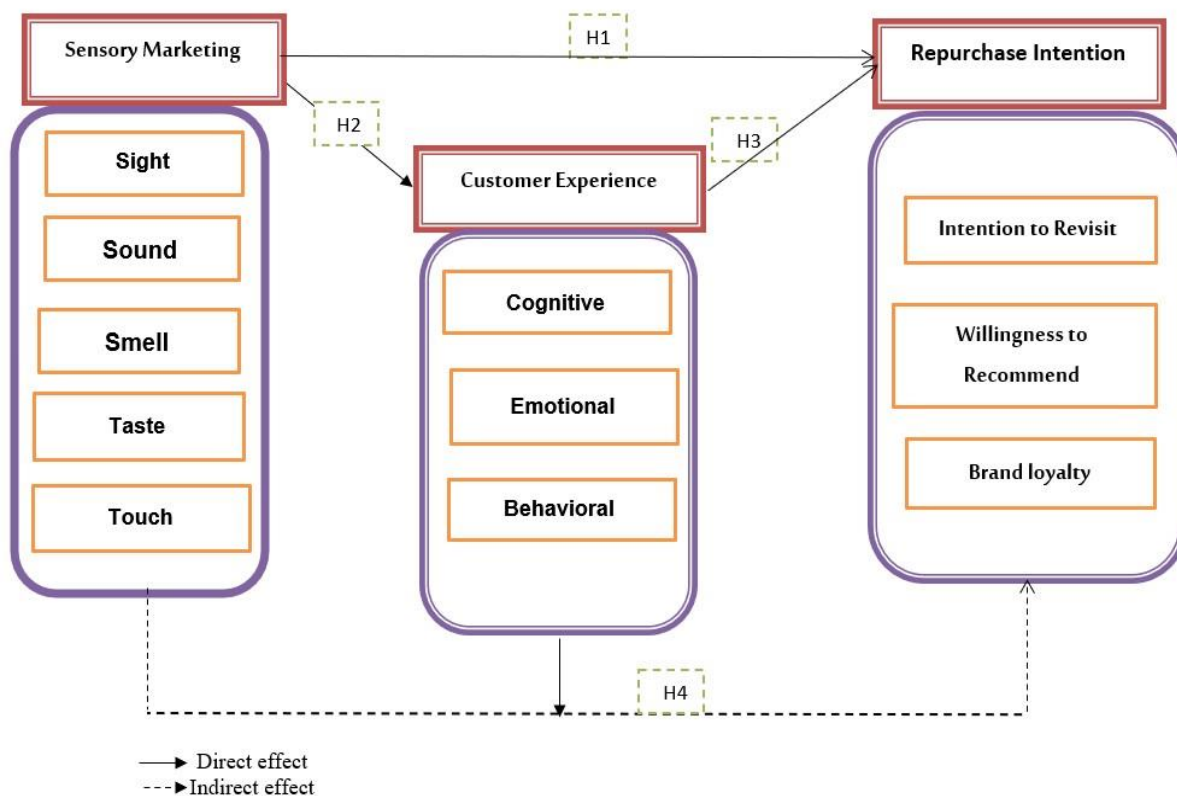
Figure (1): Research theoretical framework

Research objectives:

The current research aims to analyse the impact of sensory marketing on repurchase intention within the mediating role of customer experience: Applied on fast food customers. To achieve this goal, it will be divided into the following sub-goals:

1. **Measure the impact of sensory marketing on repurchase intention.**

2. **Examine the impact of sensory marketing on customer experience.**

3. **Investigate the impact of customer experience on repurchase intention.**

4. **Measure the impact of sensory marketing on repurchase intention by mediating customer experience.**

Research importance:

The importance of this research is evident on two levels: the scientific and practical levels:

Scientific importance: This research derives its scientific importance from its treatment of three important variables in marketing thought, namely sensory marketing, customer experience, and repurchase intention, and its endeavor to provide theoretical foundations for these three variables and help in determining the nature of the relationship between these variables.

Practical importance: The practical importance of this research stems from helping those in charge of managing fast food restaurants to achieve a better understanding of the relationship between sensory marketing and repurchase intention through the mediating role of customer experience, and to determine the extent of the impact of sensory marketing in convincing customers of the restaurants under study to intend to repurchase by influencing their five senses and gaining their satisfaction by arousing the desired emotional responses in them, and then increasing the likelihood of motivating them to make a decision to intend to repurchase, which achieves the desired gains for both the management of the restaurants under study and their customers alike.

Methodology:

Sample and data collection

The research population consists of all Egyptian customers of the most famous fast-food restaurants (KFC, Pizza Hat, MacDonalds, Berger King, Hardees, Tikka) through social media platforms, and their number has reached more than 12 million according to Mordor intelligence research company for the year 2024[1]. The sample size was determined through the sample size calculator website, where it became clear that the study sample is (384) customers. The researchers conducted a questionnaire and presented it electronically by google form to fast food restaurants by using a snowball sample, which is a non-random sample. (331) questionnaires were retrieved, free of errors and valid for statistical analysis, with a response rate reached 86%.

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https://www.mordorintelligence.com/ar/industry-reports/egypt-foodservice-market[1]

Measures

Every measuring scale was taken from earlier research. The questionnaire was divided into two sections: questions about the major study constructs were included in the first section, and questions about the respondent's demographics were included in the second. Each item was evaluated using a 5-point Likert scale, where participants rated their level of agreement from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (5). The researchers used 17 items of (Schmitt, 1999 & Krishna et al., 2016) scale to measure sensory marketing. 9 items from (Pine and Gilmore, 1999 & Gentile, 2007) scale was used to measure customer experience. Lastly, 9 items from (Zeithaml et al., 1996 & Hellier et al., 2003) scale were used to measure repurchase intention.

In this research, participants were selected using a convenience sampling approach, and the questionnaire was disseminated through multiple communication channels, such as email, social media platforms, and various messaging applications. Prior to launching the main survey, a pilot test was carried out to enhance the clarity and effectiveness of the instrument. As emphasized by Armutcu et al. (2023), pilot testing is a vital phase in survey-based research as it contributes to refining the questionnaire's structure. Similarly, Van Teijlingen and Hundley (2002) highlighted its role in strengthening the reliability and validity of data collection tools.

To ensure the instrument's quality, the pilot test involved 50 respondents, whose feedback guided the final adjustments to the questionnaire. Subsequently, a total of 331 completed surveys were obtained, meeting the recommended sample size requirements for structural equation modeling (Cohen, 1988; Westland, 2010; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007; Kline, 2011). For linguistic accuracy, the questionnaire was initially translated into Arabic, then back-translated into English, and again into Arabic by bilingual experts. Participants responded using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 5 ("strongly agree") **Appendex1**. The data collected were subsequently analyzed using Amos V.24 and SPSS V.26 statistical software.

Data analysis technique:

Researchers used Mean, standard deviation, and cronbach's Alpha for descriptive analysis by SPSS software, besides using structural equation modelling to test research hypotheses by Amos software.

Results:

1. Descriptive Statistics:

Table 1: Overview of the Demographic Distribution of the Sample

Demographic variables		Frequency	Valid Percent (%)
Gender	Male	207	62.5%
	Female	124	37.5
Age	from 20: less than 30 years	109	33%
	from 30: less than 40 years	84	25.3%
	from 40: less than 50 years	96	29%
	50 years and above	42	12.7%
Restaurant Name	KFC	102	30.8%
	Pizza Hat	64	19.3%
	MacDonalds	81	24.5%
	Berger King	32	9.6%
	Hardees	38	11.5%
	Tikka	14	4.3%
Duration of dealing with Restaurants	less than 1 year	45	13.6%
	from 1 year to less than 3 years	107	32.3%
	from 3 years to less than 5 years	121	36.6
	5 years and above	68	20.5%

Source: From the results of statistical analysis

Table 1 illustrates that the majority of respondents were male, accounting for 62.5% (207 individuals), whereas female participants comprised 37.5% (124 individuals). In terms of age distribution, the largest proportion of customers—33% (109 respondents)—fell within the 20 to less than 30 years age group. Conversely, the smallest segment—12.7% (42 respondents)—was represented by individuals aged 50 years and above.

According to restaurant name, KFC scored the highest percentage of customers with 30.8% (102 customers), while Tikka scored the lowest percentage of customers with 4.3% (14 customers). Finally, regarding customers' duration of dealing with restaurants, the category (From 3 year to less than 5 years) scored the highest percentage with 36.6% (121 customers), while the category (less than 1 year) scored the lowest percentage with 13.6% (45 customers).

2. Measurement Model Assessment:

The structural equation modeling (SEM) technique was employed to assess the structural validity of the measurement model and to verify its adequacy prior to hypothesis testing. This process involved evaluating the reliability of factor loadings, computing the Composite Reliability (CR), and estimating Cronbach's Alpha (α) to confirm internal consistency. Additionally, both convergent and discriminant validity were examined, alongside the calculation of model fit indices to ensure the robustness of the model.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics and Measurement Model Indicators

Constructs	Dimensions	Items	Loading Factor	Mean	S. D	α	CR	AVE
Sensory Marketing	**Sight**	ST.1	0.613	3.93	0.512	0.811	0.818	0.644
		ST.2	0.522					
		ST.3	0.411					
		ST.4	0.547					
	Sound	SD.1	0.616	4.03	0.438	0.761	0.774	0.631
		SD.2	0.552					
		SD.3	0.693					
	Smell	SL.1	0.642	3.86	0.542	0.822	0.834	0.582
		SL.2	0.681					
		SL.3	0.702					
	Taste	TS.1	0.638	4.11	0.621	0.819	0.828	0.668
		TS.2	0.347					
		TS.3	0.552					
		TS.4	0.591					
	Touch	TH.1	0.593	3.87	0.514	0.769	0.777	0.621
		TH.2	0.644					
		TH.3	0.701					
Customer Experience	**Cognitive**	CN.1	0.712	3.86	0.508	0.776	0.789	0.653
		CN.2	0.648					
		CN.3	0.706					
	Emotional	EN.1	0.611	4.02	0.551	0.801	0.817	0.640
		EN.2	0.536					
		EN.3	0.584					
	Behavioral	BV.1	0.614	3.94	0.322	0.742	0.753	0.587
		BV.2	0.519					
		BV.3	0.554					

Constructs	Dimensions	Items	Loading Factor	Mean	S. D	α	CR	AVE
Repurchase Intention	Revisit	RV.1	0.521	3.90	0.504	0.794	0.804	0.617
		RV.2	0.559					
		RV.3	0.621					
	Recommend	RM.1	0.522	3.78	0.424	0.762	0.771	0.528
		RM.2	0.641					
		RM.3	0.604					
	Brand Loyalty	BL.1	0.543	3.84	0.584	0.812	0.820	0.631
		BL.2	0.581					
		BL.3	0.574					

Source: From the results of statistical analysis

As presented in Table 2, all factor loadings exceeded the acceptable threshold of 0.50, with the exception of two items (ST.3 and TS.2), which fell below this benchmark and were therefore excluded from further analysis, in line with the guidelines of Hair et al. (2014). To assess the internal consistency of the constructs, both Composite Reliability (CR) and Cronbach's Alpha (α) were calculated. The results demonstrated that the CR and α values for all constructs surpassed the recommended threshold of 0.70, confirming their reliability.

In addition, convergent validity was evaluated through the Average Variance Extracted (AVE), which is expected to exceed 0.50 according to Hair et al. (2014). As indicated in the table, all AVE values met this criterion, supporting the convergent validity of the measurement model.

Table 3: Discriminant Validity Results Based on the Fornell-Larcker Approach

Variables	Sight	Sound	Smell	Taste	Cognitive	Emotional	Behavioral	Revisit	Recommend	Brand Loyalty
Sight	0.884									
Sound	0.878	0.878								
Smell	0.871	0.865	0.871							
Taste	0.866	0.860	0.864	0.868						
Touch	0.874	0.857	0.844	0.851	0.794					
Cognitive	0.855	0.863	0.814	0.854	0.724	0.642				
Emotional	0.851	0.851	0.819	0.847	0.751	0.551	0.741			
Behavioral	0.847	0.844	0.827	0.844	0.445	0.601	0.622	0.668		
Revisit	0.862	0.849	0.833	0.836	0.324	0.544	0.556	0.611	0.581	
Recommend	0.858	0.858	0.838	0.830	0.416	0.502	0.424	0.532	0.512	0.626

Variables	Sight	Sound	Smell	Taste	Cognitive	Emotional	Behavioral	Revisit	Recommend	Brand Loyalty
Brand Loyalty	0.849	0.841	0.824	0.816	0.393	0.486	0.500	0.442	0.471	0.418

Source: Prepared by the researchers based on statistical analysis

Discriminant validity assesses the degree to which a given construct is distinct from other constructs within the model. According to Hair et al. (2016), this can be confirmed when the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each construct exceeds the correlations it shares with any other construct. As illustrated in Table 3, the square roots of the AVE values for all constructs are higher than their respective inter-construct correlations, thereby supporting the discriminant validity and internal consistency of the measurement model.

Table 4: Model Fit Indices

Indices	Symbol	Acceptance Index	Result
Goodness of Fit Index	GFI	> 0.90	0.93
Root Mean Square Residual	RMR	The closer to zero	0.018
Comparative Fit Index	CFI	> 0.95	0.97
Root Mean Square Error of Approximation	RMSEA	< 0.08	0.020

Source: Prepared by the researchers based on statistical analysis

As presented in Table 4, all model fit indices fall within the recommended thresholds, indicating that the model demonstrates an acceptable level of fit. Consequently, the measurement model can be considered statistically valid.

3. Hypotheses Tests:

Table 5: Results of Hypotheses testing (direct effects)

Hypotheses	Path Coefficient	f^2	P-Value	Result
Testing H1				
H1a: Sensory Marketing ⟶ Intention to revisit	0.421**	0.19	0.00	Supported
H1b: Sensory Marketing ⟶ Willingness to Recommend	0.021	0.01	1.031	Not Supported
H1c: Sensory Marketing ⟶ Brand Loyalty	0.278**	0.31	0.00	Supported
Testing H2				
H2a: Sensory Marketing ⟶ Cognitive Experience	0.136*	0.16	0.039	Supported
H2b: Sensory Marketing ⟶ Emotional Experience	0.443**	0.30	0.00	
H2c: Sensory Marketing ⟶ Behavioral Experience	0.338**	0.32	0.00	
Testing H3				
H3a: Customer Experience ⟶ Intention to revisit	0.224*	0.37	0.021	supported
H3b: Customer Experience Willingness to Recommend	0.187*	0.19	0.033	Supported
H3c: Customer Experience ⟶ Brand Loyalty	0.132*	0.12	0.026	supported

*significant= 0.05; **significant= 0.01

Source: Prepared by the researchers based on statistical analysis

Table 5 presents the findings related to both direct and indirect effects. Concerning Hypothesis H1 and its sub-hypotheses, the results indicate that sensory marketing exerts a direct, significant, and positive effect of moderate strength on both intention to revisit ($\beta = 0.421$, $f^2 = 0.19$, P = 0.00) and brand loyalty ($\beta = 0.278$, $f^2 = 0.31$, P = 0.00). However, no significant effect was found on willingness to recommend, suggesting that H1 is only partially supported.

Regarding Hypothesis H2, the results reveal that sensory marketing has a direct, significant, and positive influence on all three dimensions of customer experience. Specifically, it impacted the cognitive dimension (β = 0.136, f^2 = 0.16, P = 0.039), the emotional dimension (β = 0.443, f^2 = 0.30, P = 0.00), and the behavioral dimension (β = 0.338, f^2 = 0.32, P = 0.00). Based on these outcomes, H2 is fully supported.

As for Hypothesis H3, the findings show that customer experience has a direct, significant, positive, and strong effect on intention to revisit (β = 0.224, f^2 = 0.37, P = 0.00), and a significant but weaker effect on willingness to recommend (β = 0.187, f^2 = 0.19, P = 0.033). Additionally, customer experience has a significant and positive effect though small in magnitude on brand loyalty (β = 0.132, f^2 = 0.12, P = 0.026). These results lend support to H3.

Table 6: Hypotheses testing results (indirect effects)

Hypotheses	Direct Path Coff	*Indirect Path Coff*	*Total Path Coff*	f^2	P-Value	Result	Mediation type
Testing H4 (indirect effect)							
H4a: Sensory Marketing ⟶ Customer Experience ⟶ Intention to revisit	0.322*	0.241*	0.563*	0.39	0.00	Supported	Partial mediation
H4b: Sensory Marketing ⟶ Customer Experience ⟶ Willingness to Recommend	0.229**	0.211**	0.440**	0.23	0.00	Supported	Full mediation
H4c: Sensory Marketing ⟶ Customer Experience ⟶ Brand Loyalty	0.193*	0.152*	0.345*	0.25	0.038	supported	Partial mediation

*significant= 0.05; **significant= 0.01

Source: Prepared by the researchers based on statistical analysis

With regard to the indirect effects, the findings indicate that customer experience plays a mediating role in the relationship between sensory marketing and each of the outcome variables. Specifically, sensory marketing indirectly influences intention to revisit (β = 0.563, f^2 = 0.39, P = 0.00), willingness to recommend (β = 0.440, f^2 = 0.23, P = 0.00), and brand loyalty (β = 0.345, f^2 = 0.25, P = 0.00) through the mediating mechanism of customer experience. These results provide strong empirical support for Hypothesis H4.

Discussion:

The primary aim of this research was to investigate both the direct and indirect influence of sensory marketing on repurchase intention, with customer experience serving as a mediating variable among Egyptian fast-food consumers. The findings revealed that sensory marketing has a significant positive effect on both repurchase intention and customer experience. Additionally, customer experience was found to significantly influence repurchase intention. Regarding indirect effects, customer experience partially mediated the relationship between sensory marketing and the dimensions of repurchase intention, with the exception of willingness to recommend.

In relation to Hypothesis H1, the results confirmed its validity. This is consistent with prior empirical findings (e.g., Srichaichanwong & Soontornthum, 2021; Dung et al., 2022; Luong et al., 2022; Kamil et al., 2023), which also reported a significant and positive effect of sensory marketing on repurchase intention. These results underscore the importance of integrating sensory marketing elements—such as visual cues, ambient sounds, and scents—into fast-food marketing strategies to enhance repeat purchase behaviors.

With regard to Hypothesis H2, the results demonstrated a significant influence of sensory marketing on customer experience, aligning with the findings of Hallgren & Mamusha (2021) and Nertsberg & Hansson (2024). These studies suggest that sensory stimuli contribute meaningfully to shaping customer perceptions and emotions during their service encounter, highlighting the necessity for marketers to incorporate sensory elements as part of their customer experience management strategies.

Concerning Hypothesis H3, findings indicated a significant effect of customer experience on repurchase intention. This result supports the outcomes of previous research (e.g., Pasharibu et al., 2018; Kavitha & Haritha, 2018; Mustikasari et al., 2021; Febriani & Ardani, 2021; Amoako, 2023; Safari et al., 2024), which emphasized that positive customer experiences play a pivotal role in fostering customer loyalty and repeat patronage. However, the findings diverge from those reported by Aldriyanti & Tjajaningsih (2022), who found no significant relationship between customer experience and repurchase intention. The current results reinforce the argument that customer experience

remains a critical determinant in shaping consumers' future behavioral intentions within the fast-food sector.

As for H4, it was supported, this result indicated that sensory marketing affect repurchase intention through customer experience, moreover, customer experience has a vital role in affecting repurchase intention. This aligns with prior research emphasizing the emotional and experiential value derived from sensory engagement, particularly in service-based industries like fast-food.

Conclusion:

This research offers empirical support for the mediating role of customer experience in the relationship between sensory marketing and repurchase intention among customers of fast-food restaurants in Egypt. The incorporation of sensory elements into marketing efforts contributes to elevating the perceived value of the service, while simultaneously encouraging favorable customer attitudes and reinforcing loyalty-related behaviors.

Implications:

Theorical Implications:

From a theoretical perspective, this research deepens the conceptual understanding of experiential marketing by empirically confirming the mediating influence of customer experience within sensory-focused service contexts. It contributes to the literature by integrating sensory marketing with behavioral intention theories, offering a comprehensive view of how multi-sensory stimuli affect consumer decision-making.

Practical Implications:

Practically, the findings encourage fast-food restaurants and service marketers to strategically design sensory experiences that enhance customer satisfaction and loyalty. Investing in sensory elements such as interior design, scent branding, sound ambiance, and taste consistency can differentiate the brand and stimulate repeat visits and purchases. Moreover, managers in the food and beverage industry are advised to carefully consider the visual presentation of their products, ensure consistent product taste, and thoughtfully select in-store materials and

design elements in order to meet customer needs and align with their expectations.

Limitations and Future Research:

The research goal was to offer a model that, through mediating customer experience, illustrates how sensory marketing affects repurchase intentions. Notwithstanding the theoretical advances the current research makes in light of the hypothesis findings test, it has several limitations that may inspire researchers to suggest new lines of inquiry. These limitations are outlined as follows:

1) The current research only looked at how repurchase intentions were impacted by marketing sensory. Future research can therefore examine the impact of additional variables, such as the store environment, customer trust, WOM, customer satisfaction, and, on repurchase intentions.

2) The effect of sensory marketing on repurchase intention was examined in the current research using customer experience as a mediator. Future research can examine other variables, such as customer satisfaction, perceived service quality, brand trust or emotional attachment as mediator or moderator variables in this relationship.

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Appendex1: Survey Questionnaire

Please indicate your level of agreement with each statement using the following scale:

1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree

Sensory Marketing - Sight

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
The colors used in the restaurant are visually pleasing.					
The overall layout and design of the restaurant are attractive.					
The lighting in the restaurant creates a pleasant atmosphere.					
Visual elements make it easy to find what I want on the menu.					

Sensory Marketing - Sound

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
The music played suits the environment.					
The volume of the music/sound is appropriate.					
I enjoy the soundscape (music, chatter, etc.) while dining.					

Sensory Marketing - Smell

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
The smell of the food is appetizing.					
The restaurant has a consistent and attractive scent.					
The smell influences my mood positively.					

Sensory Marketing - Taste

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
The food tastes consistently good.					
The flavor of the meals exceeds my expectations.					
I find the menu items flavorful and enjoyable.					
The food quality aligns with its price.					

Sensory Marketing - Touch

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
The texture of the food feels fresh and well-prepared.					
The furniture and physical space feel comfortable.					
The food packaging is easy to handle and of high quality.					

Customer Experience - Cognitive

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
The restaurant's environment stimulates my curiosity.					
I feel mentally engaged when visiting this restaurant.					
I notice interesting things that catch my attention here.					

Customer Experience - Emotional

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
Dining here makes me feel relaxed and satisfied.					
I feel positive emotions when thinking about this restaurant.					
I enjoy the overall ambiance and emotional vibe here.					

Customer Experience - Behavioral

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
I like trying new items or promotions at this restaurant.					
I tend to stay longer here than other fast-food places.					
The experience influences my behavior to return or explore more.					

Repurchase Intention - Intent to Revisit

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
I intend to return to this restaurant soon.					
I consider this restaurant one of my regular choices.					

I will choose this restaurant again when given the option.					

Repurchase Intention - Willingness to Recommend

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
I would suggest this restaurant to others.					
I talk positively about this place to friends/family.					
I would leave a good review for this restaurant online.					

Repurchase Intention - Brand Loyalty

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
I am loyal to this brand and often choose it over competitors.					
I feel emotionally connected to this fast-food brand.					
I rarely visit other fast-food chains unless necessary.					