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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SENSORY MARKETING AND PURCHASING DECISION: CUSTOMER SATISFACTION AS A MODERATOR

Abstract. *This research investigates the relationship between sensory marketing and purchasing decisions using customer satisfaction as a moderator. The study was applied on the customers of "Qasr E-Kababgi" restaurants (Cairo branches) as this restaurant chain is considered as one of the largest and most famous restaurants specialized in oriental food in Egypt. In addition, it is considered as a touristic destination and a favorite place to visit for foreigners. Accepted responses to the questionnaire were (385) responses. To assess the reliability and validity of the instrument and test the research framework, the researchers used smart PLS 4. Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), a variance-based approach utilizes the total variance to estimate the model parameters. The research findings showed that there is a positive relationship among all variables, and customer satisfaction moderates the relationship between Sensory marketing and Purchasing decision.*
Keywords: *sensory marketing, customer satisfaction, purchasing decision, purchasing decision process, moderating effect.*

Introduction

The human senses have a major effect on consumers' purchasing decisions. Marketers have quickly integrated the senses into brand communication to foster an emotional bond with a certain product or brand (Shahid, Paul, Gilal, & Ansari, 2022). Sensory cues have a significant impact on consumer emotions and are essential for the development of strong emotional bonds between consumers and brands. As a vital instrument for strengthening the relationship between a product and its consumer, sensory marketing now involves stimulating all of the senses and evoking feelings. Furthermore, it is believed that sensory marketing cues are a crucial precursor to marketers' efforts to connect emotionally with and address the constantly evolving and increasingly aspirational modern consumer base. Customer emotions, preferences, and behaviour are governed by mechanisms of perception, memory, and learning that are influenced by sensory marketing, affecting all five human senses. The goal is to develop a sense of awareness that strengthens the relationship with customers, albeit at a variable pace. A remarkable sensory experience can influence a customer's attitude, behaviour, foster a close bond and emotional attachment to the good or service, and raise satisfaction levels. As a result, the buyer is more likely to make purchases, spend more time in the business, be more approachable, and grow to be a devoted client (Shahid, Paul, Gilal, & Ansari, 2022).

This paper aims to investigate the relationship among three variables which are: Sensory marketing (as an independent variable), Customer satisfaction (as a moderator), and Purchasing decision (as a dependent variable).

Literature Review
2.1. Sensory Marketing
The different purchasing experiences and consumption processes that each person goes through are greatly influenced by their five senses. People become aware of and form opinions about businesses, brands, and goods with the aid of their senses. The senses take in various physical stimuli, after which the process of perception takes place. The kinds, quantity, and arrangement of these inputs influence each person's perception process. Previous studies have looked at the primary effects of various stimuli, which include taste, touch, hearing, smell, and vision.
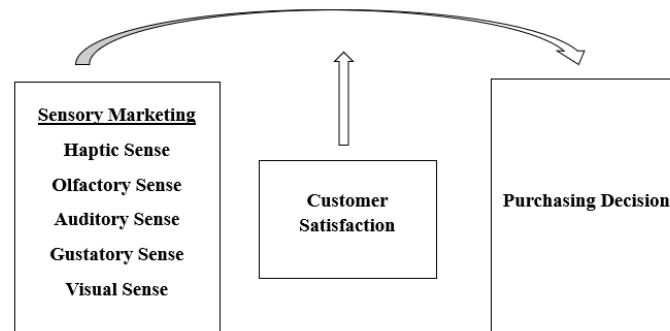

Figure 1. Research Model
Source: developed by authors

According to (Erenkol & AK, 2015), the process of trying to make sense of the world around us using our five senses is called perception. Sense organs are instruments that help us get information about the world around us. Actually, before making a purchase, customers prefer to see, touch, hear, smell, or taste a product — on other words, to feel it (Erenkol & AK, 2015). The goal to reduce the perceived degree of risk for customers and the pursuit of the best possible solution to meet their demands are the root causes of this process. This feeling causes one to begin the process of perception in parallel to expectations, prior experiences, and motivations. The five senses — tastes, scents, sights, sounds, and touching — as well as individual stimulants like goals, objectives, and prior experiences, are all included in this list of general stimulants. Products, labels, packaging, commercials, and retail layouts are all regarded as stimulants.

Consumers are exposed to stimulants when they come into physical contact with them. The process of being exposed to inputs from the environment is mediated by sense organs, which are also responsible for creating sensation (Erenkol & AK, 2015). Because of this process, people become aware of stimulants produced by their environment, which they interpret and react to based on personal circumstances and the stimulant's nature. As a result, the nature of stimulants influences the attention that should be paid to them and, in turn, indirectly affects the consumer's perception process (Erenkol & AK, 2015). Past experiences and motivations that affect expectations are therefore regarded as personal elements that customize the perception process (Erenkol & AK, 2015).

Environmental stimuli cause an emotional reaction in consumers, which then triggers a behavioral response. In actuality, this is the stimulus-organism-response paradigm (Erenkol & AK, 2015). The paradigm suggests that consumers have three emotional responses in response to these environmental stimuli: dominance, arousal, and pleasure (Krupka, 2023). It should be noted that approach and avoidance are the two distinct behaviors that arise from these emotional responses. Avoidance behavior, refers to running away from the environment and refusing to interact with people. Approach behavior, on the other hand, refers to a desire to stay, explore, and accept to be with others in the environment (Krupka, 2023; Erenkol & AK, 2015).

Customers' moods and purchasing behavior are influenced by elements like colors, light, brightness, patterns, product and store designs and arrangements, and visual sense, which processes 80% of the information in the environment (Erenkol & AK, 2015).

According to (Pareek & Jain, 2022), a study was conducted on the impact of sensory marketing on young people's purchasing decisions, with a focus on the fast-food industry in the Kayamkulam locality in India. The study's goals were to examine how sensory marketing affects consumers' purchasing decisions especially youth behavior in the food industry. According to the study's findings, sensory marketing offers customers a whole experience and is a particularly engaging approach to capture attention

Dimensions of Sensory Marketing

1. Visual Sense

One can think of visualization as a strategy. Through sensory stimulation, the visual sense can enhance brand awareness and enhance the perception of a product or brand, thus improving the consumer experience (Utama, 2022). Symbols or similar messages that the business wishes to portray about itself then help to shape a customer's impression of the company and serve as the foundation for that customer's opinion of the company's identity (Utama, 2022). Most people agree that one of the most powerful and alluring human senses is sight. We can identify alterations and distinctions when we observe a new design, different packaging, or a new shop because of our visual sense and visual system. When it comes to senses, sight is one of the most prevalent (Utama, 2022).

2. Auditory Sense

According to (Utama, 2022), In society, sound has always been vital. The majority of people view music and sound as inspirational mediums that frequently help to define an individual's identity. Reasonable expressions like music or jingles provide the opportunity to produce a sound experience. The same phrase can also be used to market a brand or product, or it might support a specific subject. A smart strategy considers the reality that consumers respond emotionally to sound and music. It can be fun to express brand identity in novel and interesting ways by working with a music producer or musician (Utama, 2022). To become more unique or personal, though, takes work. Research on auditory perception revealed that songs or music had a favorable impact on customers' pleasant experiences.

3. Olfactory Sense

Our emotional states are strongly influenced by aroma, and our sense of smell and emotions are tightly intertwined. Scent can play a role in sensory experiences that help consumers perceive memories, raise awareness, and develop both short- and long-term positive brand perceptions. Aroma contributes to the attention-grabbing aspects of short-term marketing campaigns for the brand or product. When it comes to creating a company's long-term strategy identity, scent will be crucial. For example, the popcorn smell is associated with the cinema company (Utama, 2022). Research on how the olfactory sense affects the long-term viability of coffee shop franchises revealed a favorable impact that results in customer satisfaction (Utama, 2022).

4. Gustatory Sense

One of our most unique emotional senses is the taste bud. This fact is frequently demonstrated in daily life by concepts of sweetness, sourness, and flavor. Taste buds on the tongue are used to detect similar flavors (Utama, 2022). A corporation can establish a product or brand image by creating various flavor sensations, which will help to strengthen the company's identity. It makes little difference if the brand or company's products inherently appeal to certain tastes (Utama, 2022).

5. Haptic Sense

Through the sense of touch, we are able to physically interact with the environment and examine and study objects. The sense of touch helps develop a feeling of shape, which helps us identify an object's texture by describing it as round, pointed, or complicated. Additionally, we don't always need to touch objects because we can recall and experience their sensations simply by

gazing at or thinking about them. Research on the touch-sensorial experiences that customers have when they interact with materials in a store, hotel, or cafe revealed that haptic sense might positively impact and sway their decision to buy anything there (Utama, 2022).

2.2. Customer Satisfaction

A high number of satisfied customers is necessary for the existence of numerous firms on the market. The most crucial element in a business's survival and expansion in the marketplace is its customers. It follows that companies that want to compete must offer their customers conditions that are both valuable and distinctive and that satisfy their needs. This satisfaction includes not only the emotions associated with the purchase transaction but also the environment that exists both before and after the purchase is completed (Anderson, Pearo, & Widener, 2008).

According to (Manyanga, Makanyeza, & Muranda, 2022), sustaining customer satisfaction is crucial to the business success on the long-term (Manyanga, Makanyeza, & Muranda, 2022). Customer satisfaction and customer delight are often related. Satisfying products or services provide their customers with the required value. The ISO 10004 standard states that "satisfaction is a judgement, an opinion given by the client." The degree of satisfaction reflects the difference between the consumer's perception of the actual product and their expectation of the product". (Annathurai, Senathirajah, Haque, & Devasia, 2023)

Consumer decisions are affected by a wide range of factors, including emotional, sociological, or demographic influences as well as economic ones like earnings, prices, savings, loans, and the effect of marketing tools (Guido, 2015). It is challenging to identify and satisfy consumer needs, expectations, preferences, and behavior, yet doing so does not guarantee market success. This can be attributed to the illogical behavior of customers. When a customer purchases a product, they typically have certain expectations about its functionality, application, and quality. They pay for the value they anticipate from the thing rather than the actual cost of the item (Guido, 2015).

A person's degree of pleasure with a service or product at a certain moment in location and time is measured as present satisfaction. Accumulated satisfaction is the outcome of consumers' encounters with a product, service, or company over a brief period of time (Ngo, 2015).

2.3. Purchasing decision

To enhance competitiveness and ensure long-term survival, it has become necessary for, restaurant managers to clearly understand customers' purchasing decision, preferences, and factors that influence their choices. This information enables them to provide services that suit customers' expectations and thus increase their satisfaction. Recurring Purchase from customers occur when the product or Service fulfills their expectations (Nabella, 2021).

The customer purchasing decision-making process can be defined as the stages that customers go through to make the final purchasing decision (Hanaysha, 2018; Alshurideh et al., 2023). It can be viewed as sequences of decisions made before actually completing the purchasing activity.

The customer purchasing process typically undergoes several stages, usually begins with recognizing a need (problem), then seeking information, evaluation of alternatives, deciding to purchase, and ultimately, exhibiting post-purchase behavior (Kotler & Armstrong, 2014; Salem, 2018; Hanaysha, 2022). Figure 2 shows that the Purchase decision process consists of five stages:
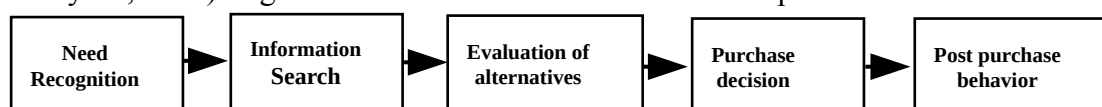
| Need Recognition | ▶ | Information Search | ▶ | Evaluation of alternatives | ▶ | Purchase decision | ▶ | Post purchase behavior |

Figure 2. Purchasing Decision Process
Source: (Kotler, Armstrong, Balasubramanian, 2023)

The recognition of a need: can be initiated through internal stimuli, such as when a person's innate needs, like hunger or thirst, reach a sufficiently intense level to generate a motivation. Additionally, a need can be stimulated by external stimuli, which play an important role

in eliciting and shaping our perception of needs (Kotler & Armstrong, 2014). For example, seeing an advertisement for a delicious meal or smelling the aroma of freshly baked bread can trigger a hunger need.

Information search: refers to the process of exploring the surrounding environment in order to gather relevant information that can facilitate making a well-informed decision (Solomon, 2019).

Evaluation of alternatives: In the evaluation stage, customers rank choices and forms purchase intentions. In the context of choosing a restaurant, as the number of restaurants increases, individuals are faced with a plethora of options. Consequently, they seek variety in order to select better alternatives from the numerous choices available. This desire for variety prompts individuals to engage in information search by actively seeking out information about different restaurants, such as their menus, cuisines, customer reviews, and ratings. Through this information search process, individuals can gather the necessary details to evaluate and compare the various restaurant options, ultimately aiding them in making a more informed decision that aligns with their preferences and desired dining experience.

The purchase decision: According to (Kotler & Armstrong, 2014), is regarded as a crucial phase within the buyer's decision-making process. This stage signifies the moment when the customer makes the final decision to proceed with the actual purchase of a specific product or service (Santus et al., 2024).

Consumer purchasing decisions are impacted by a range of factors, which can be classified as external, internal, and marketing factors based on the decision-making context and level. External factors encompass elements such as culture, subculture, groups, situation, social class, and family (Salem, 2018). On the other hand, internal factors consist of perception, attitude, knowledge, personality, lifestyle, involvement, and roles (Salem, 2018). Lastly, marketing factors encompass aspects such as the product itself, package aesthetics, promotional activities, distribution channels, service quality, and pricing strategies (Salem, 2018; Mutsikiwa & Marumbwa, 2013).

Finally, understanding consumer behaviours and the purchase decision process empowers organizations to develop impactful marketing programs. This knowledge enables them to create strategies that effectively resonate with the target market, deliver a higher level of value to customers. (Hanaysha et al., 2021), and outperform competitors (Hanaysha et al., 2021; Imran &Arshad, 2023).

Methods

The research utilized a quantitative methodology, wherein data was gathered through the distribution of questionnaires.

The measurement items for constructs were derived from previous research studies. The initial part of the survey focused on collecting demographic information from the participants. including gender and age. The second section was about the measurement of the research variables. First, sensory marketing dimensions was measured through (21) items. The Purchase decision was measured using (5) items adapted from (Hanaysha, 2022; Hanaysha, 2018). Finally, Customer satisfaction was measured using (5) items adapted from (Yulisetiarini, 2014).

A Likert scale consisting of five points was employed for all the measurement items, with responses ranging from "1 = strongly disagree" to "5 = strongly agree" (Zhang & Wang, 2022). The appendix shows the dimensions and items measuring each construct.

Research Sample: The study was applied on the customers of "Qasr E-Kababgi" restaurants (Cairo branches) in Egypt, as this restaurant chain is considered as one of the largest and most famous restaurants specialized in oriental food in Egypt. In addition, it is considered as a touristic destination and a favourite place to visit for foreigners. Accepted responses to the questionnaire were (385) responses, described as follows (Table 1).

The descriptive findings of our sample showed that 51% of the respondents were females and 49% were males. The largest percentage of the study sample is approximately 28% were between 31-40 years old.

Table 1. Demographics

№	Classification	Category	Frequency	%
1	Gender	Male	189	49
		Female	196	51
2	Age	18-20	80	21
		21-30	72	19
		31-40	108	28
		41-50	100	26
		51and above	25	6

Research Hypothesis:

H1: Sensory marketing significantly affects purchasing decisions.

H2: Sensory marketing significantly affects Customer satisfaction.

H3: Customer satisfaction significantly affects purchasing decisions.

H4: Customer satisfaction moderates the relationship between sensory marketing and purchasing decisions.

Results

Table 2
Results (reliability and convergent validity)

Construct and measures	Loading	Cronbach's alpha	CR	AVE
Touch items				
X1.1	0.790	0.845	0.896	0.683
X1.2	0.858			
X1.3	0.833			
X1.4	0.824			
Smell items				
X2.1	0.775	0.834	0.890	0.670
X2.2	0.840			
X2.3	0.878			
X2.4	0.776			
Vision items				
X3.1	0.778	0.873	0.908	0.665
X3.2	0.804			
X3.3	0.869			
X3.4	0.884			
X3.5	0.734			
Hearing items				
X4.1	0.750	0.881	0.919	0.741
X4.2	0.899			
X4.3	0.892			
X4.4	0.894			
Taste items				
X5.1	0.877	0.922	0.945	0.810
X5.2	0.921			
X5.3	0.889			
X5.4	0.912			
Customer satisfaction				
Y1	0.849	0.905	0.929	0.724
Y2	0.854			
Y3	0.840			
Y4	0.863			
Y5	0.846			
Purchase decision				
Z1	0.903	0.916	0.937	0.748
Z2	0.837			
Z3	0.884			
Z4	0.848			
Z5	0.851			

Measurement model assessment:

To assess the reliability and validity of the instrument and test the research Hypothesis. The researchers used smart PLS 4. (PLS-SEM) (Raza et al., 2020), a variance-based approach, utilizes the total variance to estimate the model parameters (Raza, 2020). This method is particularly useful for analysing complex relationships and latent constructs in research studies (Hair et al., 2019). Table 2 shows the reliability and convergent validity of the measurement.

Upon examining the results in Table 2, all the indicators were found to exhibit high factor loadings, exceeding 0.7 consequently, no indicators were deleted.

According to (Hair et al., 2019) construct is considered to have convergent validity when its average variance extracted (AVE) exceeds 0.50 (Adaileh et al., 2020). We observed that all the constructs surpass the minimum recommended threshold, with AVE values exceeding (0.60). Additionally, we conducted a composite reliability (CR) check and computed Cronbach's alpha (Madiawati& Pardede, 2023). Both these metrics indicate convergent validity when their values exceed 0.70 according to (Hair et al., 2014; Hair et al., 2019).

To verify the discriminant validity of the first-order constructs, we employed the approach outlined by (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Raza et al., 2020). According to this method, the squared correlation relative to the average variance extracted (AVE) should exceed the diagonal inter-construct correlations. Table 3 illustrates the results of the Fornell and Larcker method, confirming the discriminant validity.

Table 3
Discriminant validity - Fornell and Larcker (1981)

Constructs	Touch	Smell	Vision	Hearing	Taste	Customer satisfaction	Purchase decision
Touch	0.827						
Smell	0.753	0.818					
Vision	0.632	0.768	0.816				
Hearing	0.565	0.530	0.673	0.861			
Taste	0.489	0.408	0.534	0.853	0.900		
Satisfaction	0.571	0.559	0.650	0.787	0.771	0.851	
Purchase decision	0.567	0.566	0.663	0.721	0.685	0.854	0.865

Upon examining the values displayed on the main diagonal of Table 3, it becomes evident that all the constructs satisfy Fornell and Larcker's (1981) criterion. Based on the findings, it can be concluded that the measurement model utilized in this study is appropriate.

Structural model evaluation: The standard procedure for evaluating the structural model involves several key elements. These include determining the coefficient of determination (R^2), assessing the blindfolding-based cross-validated redundancy measure (Q^2), and examining the statistical significance and relevance of path coefficients. These evaluations are typically conducted at a significance level of 0.05. (Hair et al., 2019).

Table 4 shows the value of (R^2) for the purchasing decision was (0.749). The (R^2) for the customer satisfaction was (0.650), which indicates that the model has predictive accuracy due to the fact that these values are higher than the recommended minimum of 0.10.

Table 4
Result of R^2 &Q^2

Constructs	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Q^2
Purchase Decision	0.749	0.748	0.593
Customer satisfaction	0.650	0.650	0.649

Another commonly employed test, known as the Stone-Geisser (Q^2) test, was conducted to assess predictive relevance for the constructs (Raza et al., 2020). The results of this test supported the values of the second-order constructs, indicating that they were greater than zero and positive. (Raza et al., 2020) This outcome signifies that this model possesses accurate predictive capabilities (Hair et al., 2019).

Hypothesis Testing: The model underwent testing using a partial least squares structural equation model (PLS-SEM) analysis. Bootstrapping, with a maximum of 500 iterations, was performed using SmartPLS 4.0 software. The results are illustrated in Figure 3. Table 5 shows the results of hypothesis tests according to path analysis.
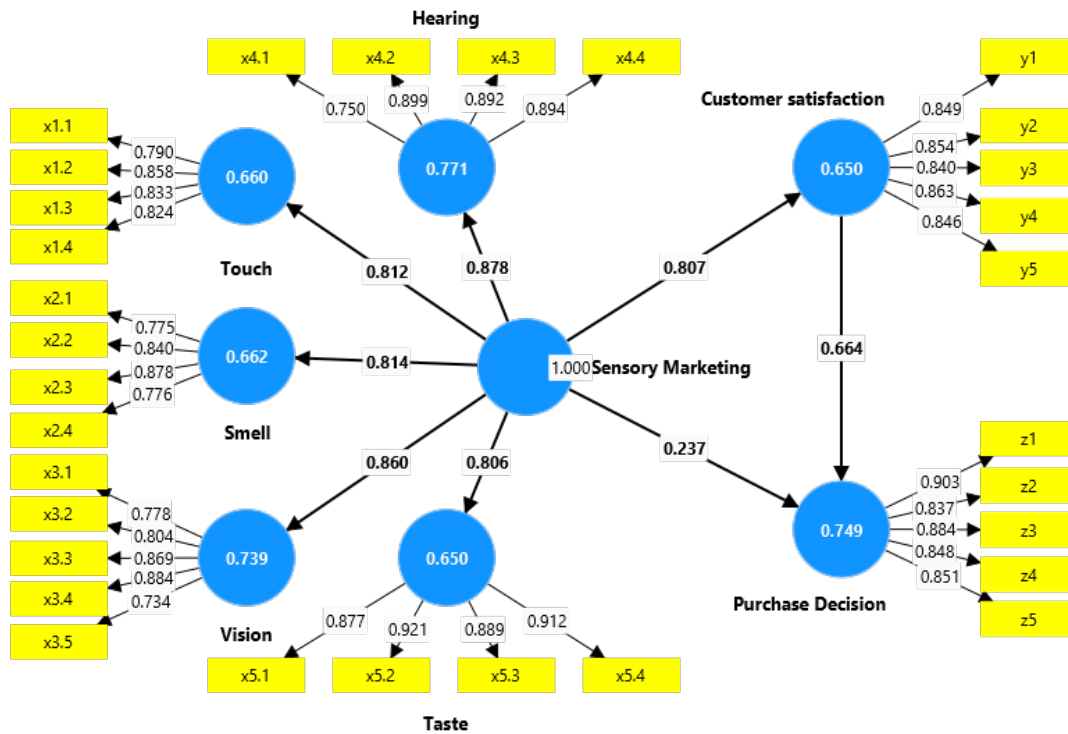
Figure 3. SEM model

Table 5
The hypotheses testing result

Hypotheses	Path coefficient	Standard error	T-statistics	P value	Test outcome
H1.Sensory marketing -> purchase decision	0.237	0.063	3.780	0.000	Supported
H2.Sensory marketing -> customer satisfaction	0.807	0.023	35.260	0.000	Supported
H3.customer satisfaction -> purchase decision	0.664	0.062	10.689	0.000	Supported
Specific indirect hypotheses assessing the moderator					
H4.Sensory Marketing -> Customer satisfaction -> Purchase Decision	0.535	0.050	10.634	0.000	Supported

According to (Hair et al., 2010) hypothesis should supported if its t-values is more than 1.65 and p-values are less than 0.05 (Raza et al., 2020). The results show that Sensory marketing have a positive and direct effect on Purchase decision (Path coefficient = 0.237, t-values = 3.780, p value = 0.00), thus H1 is supported. Similarly, that Sensory marketing have a positive and direct effect on customer satisfaction (Path coefficient = 0.807, t-values = 35.260, p-value = 0.00) the second hypothesis was also accepted. Similarly, H3 is also supported, where customer satisfaction strongly affects purchase decision (Path coefficient = 0.664, t-values = 10.634, p-value = 0.00). Finally, the results showed that there is a significant moderating effect of customer satisfaction in the relationship between sensory marketing and purchasing decision (Path coefficient = 0.535, t-values = 10.634, p-values = 0.00).

Discussion

This paper investigated the relationship among three variables which are: Sensory marketing (as an independent variable), Customer satisfaction (as a moderator), and Purchasing decision (as a dependent variable). The study findings revealed that there is a positive relationship among all the research variables, and (Customer satisfaction) moderates the relationship between sensory marketing and purchasing decision.

The study population is limited to Cairo governorate (the capital), which does not represent the entire population of Egypt. For future research, It would be of great interest to apply the same study model to other restaurants in Egypt. Researchers have provided several recommendations for restaurants based on their findings. Firstly, they suggest utilizing elements such as lighting, music, and interior design to create an appealing sensory experience that welcomes and engages customers. Additionally, sensory elements like aroma, taste, and texture can be incorporated into the dining experience to enhance its overall quality. Offering a diverse and flavourful menu that stimulates customers' senses can leave a lasting impression. Presenting food and beverages in visually enticing ways, using attractive plating techniques and garnishes, can further enhance the appeal. Personalization is key, and tailoring the dining experience to individual customer preferences can significantly improve customer satisfaction. Collecting data on customer preferences can be valuable in providing personalized recommendations or special promotions tailored to each customer, ensuring a more satisfying and personalized experience. It is also important to educate and train restaurant staff on sensory marketing and customer satisfaction, ensuring that they are knowledgeable about the menu and capable of making suitable recommendations. Finally, providing excellent customer service throughout the dining experience is crucial in creating a positive and memorable experience for customers.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare that no potential conflicts of interest in publishing this work. Furthermore, the authors have witnessed ethical issues such as plagiarism, informed consent, misconduct, data fabrication, double publication or submission, and redundancy.

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Appendix A: Questionnaire

1) Sensory Marketing (Independent Variable)

Touch items
- The menu offered by the restaurant contains a new combination of foods
- Prefer to accompany the dishes served in this restaurant with soft-touch scented napkins.
- The table surface in this restaurant is shiny and smooth.
- You believe that using soft seating in the restaurant helps you stay inside the restaurant for a longer time.

Smell items
- The smell of foods in this restaurant is unique
- You enjoy your time in this restaurant because of the amazing odor of the place
- The food smell motivates you to try this restaurant without prior planning.
- The food smell increases your desire for eating.

Vision items
- The restaurant interior design has an effect on your psychology.
- Good lights nourish your mood.
- You prefer above- normal clean restaurants.
- The variety of foods offered in this restaurant is adequate comparing to other restaurants.
- Well-designed menus encourage you to buy more food.

Hearing items
- The surrounding music encourage your positive attitude during your visit in the restaurant.
- The surrounding music encourages you to spend more time in the restaurant.
- The surrounding music helps you to rewind some favorite memories.
- The surrounding music helps you to overcome the waiting time while preparing your order.

Taste items

• The drinks and juices offered in this restaurant tastes better compared to other restaurants because they are natural.

• The food in this restaurant tastes very delicious.

• The unique taste of food is the main reason behind you desire in ordering more food and enjoying them.

• You repeat your order every time you visit this restaurant.

2) Customer Satisfaction (Moderating Variable)

• Employees care about customers' needs and wants.

• Employees are able to provide good and friendly answer for customer's complaint.

• Customers feel easy in using the offered service.

• The restaurant location is easily accessible.

• All of the employees are neat in their appearance.

3) Purchasing decision (Dependent Variable)

• I feel good about my decision to eat from this restaurant.

• I will positively recommend this restaurant brand to other people.

• I often eat from this restaurant.

• I intend to purchase again from this restaurant in the future.

• Overall, I am satisfied with my experience with this restaurant.