

THE ROLE OF MULTISENSORY MARKETING ON CUSTOMER LOYALTY OF CONVENIENCE STORES

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Abstract

Multisensory marketing is an interesting topic to be studied further amidst the increasingly competitive market for customer retention. It involves the five senses of customers: visual marketing to pamper the sense of sight, auditory marketing by providing sound or tone for the sense of hearing, olfactory marketing as an effort to stimulate the sense of smell, tactile marketing for the sense of touch, and gustatory marketing to provide an experience for the sense of taste. Multisensory marketing can be applied not only to the service sector, but also to other sectors, such as the retail industry, especially convenience stores. This study aims to investigate the role of multisensory marketing on customer loyalty in the context of the convenience store retail sector in Malang City, East Java, Indonesia. To achieve the research objectives, a quantitative approach was used through a questionnaire. A total of 214 questionnaires were distributed, collected, and analyzed from customers of FamilyMart and K3Mart convenience stores in Malang City. Multiple regression analysis was employed to investigate the research model. The

results show that auditory, olfactory, and gustatory marketing had a significant influence on customer loyalty, while visual and tactile marketing did not have a significant influence.

Keywords: Multisensory Marketing, Brand Loyalty, Convenience Store, Retail Sector

INTRODUCTION

Background

Consumers are valuable assets for any business (Zahri & Yıldırım, 2022). Therefore, understanding consumer behavior is crucial to the success and survival of both consumers and marketing organizations (Anetoh, Okolo, Mmamel, Obikeze, & Oranusi, 2020). Companies will do anything to build long-term customer loyalty (Kotler & Armstrong, 2018), as building brand loyalty is a smart marketing strategy (Solomon, 2018).

Customers are often attracted to a brand based on their sensory experiences (Kumar, 2013). As humans, we possess psychological stimuli that can evoke passion in our lives (Widyastuti, 2022). Almost all of our understanding of the world is largely shaped by our senses (Randhir et al., 2016). Multisensory marketing is a strategy that utilizes the various senses—including sight, hearing, touch, smell, and taste—to attract customers (Aprilianty & Farizi, 2023). Sensory stimulation is used by various brands to encourage desired behaviors among their customers (Moreira et al., 2017). While conventional marketing is built on the idea that customers choose products based on their functional attributes and how well they meet their needs, new marketing concepts seek to be closer to nature by appealing to the senses (Ramanankonenana & Randriamamonjy, 2022).

Multisensory marketing is a significant modern topic that has recently attracted the attention of academics and marketers (Zaghloul & Ezzat, 2024). Several studies have demonstrated that sensory marketing significantly influences consumer purchasing patterns and has a positive effect on customer loyalty (Zahri & Yıldırım, 2022). Specifically, visual,

olfactory, auditory, tactile, and gustatory marketing can effectively increase customer loyalty, particularly in contexts like luxury hotels (Chen et al., 2021). The direct enhancement of customer loyalty by sensory experiences has also been supported by research (Torabi et al., 2021).

Multisensory marketing has received attention from many researchers in recent years, while studies on multisensory brand experiences have received less attention (Murwani, Rooseno, Cakramihardja, & Widjaja, 2023). Numerous studies have investigated the relationship between sensory marketing and customer loyalty, indicating the need for further exploration: examining the influence of other independent variables alongside sensory experiences (Torabi, Hamidi, & Safaie, 2021), conducting research outside the coffee shop or food and beverage industry to explore its application in other business sectors (Dwiputri, Syahputra, & Pradana, 2024), and beyond the luxury hotel context (Chen, Zhang, Zhang, & Zou, 2021). Retailers employ a number of strategies, one of which is using multisensory marketing in the retail environment to attract customers (Rathee & Rajain, 2021) and influence customer mood (Le, Mai, Nguyen, & Vu, 2024).

A study by Rathee & Rajain (2021), which examined multisensory marketing at several retail outlets in the Indian Capital Region, found that multisensory marketing which stimulates the senses of sight, hearing, smell, and touch, was influential in attracting customers, with sight and touch being the most prominent. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine the role of multisensory marketing on customer loyalty in the minimarket retail sector.

Problem Formulation

Based on this background, the research problems are formulated as follow: (1) How does visual marketing influence customer loyalty? (2) How does auditory marketing influence customer loyalty? (3) How does olfactory marketing influence customer loyalty? (4) How does tactile marketing influence customer loyalty? and (5) How does gustatory marketing influence customer loyalty?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Customer Loyalty

In marketing concepts, customer loyalty is often associated with a brand (Zahri & Yildirim, 2022). The term customer loyalty emerged with the concept of relationship marketing (Chen, Zhang, Zhang, & Zou, 2021). High customer loyalty is characterized by repeat purchases of a specific product or brand or sticking with a brand or service over time and tend to continue to purchase even in the face of price changes (Torabi, Hamidi, & Safaie, 2021). Measurement indicators for the customer loyalty variable are repeat purchases, positive word-of-mouth, and brand switching.

Mutisensory Marketing

Multisensory marketing, which utilizes the senses of sight (visual), smell (olfactory), hearing (auditory), touch (tactile), and taste (gustatory), can increase customer loyalty (Chen, Zhang, Zhang, & Zou, 2021). Companies develop multisensory marketing strategies to differentiate their brands from competitors, especially when functional or rational attributes such as price and quality are nearly similar (Mbatha, Koopman, & Chuchu, 2023). The era of multisensory marketing is one where companies carefully consider the role of the senses in their products (Solomon, 2018).

Visual Marketing

Sight is the first stimulus we receive and evokes feelings, memories, and emotions (Rehman, Fahim, Irshad, & Hussain, 2021). Visuals are the most powerful sensory tool in marketing (Gupta & Mishra, 2020). Color, design, logos, and photos are crucial visual elements for a brand to differentiate itself from others, thus creating a distinctive and easily recognizable identity (Rehman, Fahim, Irshad, & Hussain, 2021). Visual marketing can increase customer loyalty (Chen, Zhang, Zhang, & Zou, 2021). Measurement indicators for visual marketing variables are color selection and interior design. The following hypothesis is proposed and investigated in this study:

H1: Visual marketing has a positive influence on customer loyalty.

Auditory Marketing

Sound can be utilized as an efficient tool to communicate consumers' subconscious needs (Gupta & Mishra, 2020) and profoundly impact mood and purchasing habits (Randhir, Latasha, Tooraiven, & Monishan, 2016). Music and other sounds can be so relevant that they become the voice of a brand (Rehman, Fahim, Irshad, & Hussain, 2021). Auditory marketing can increase customer loyalty (Chen, Zhang, Zhang, & Zou, 2021). Measurement indicators for auditory marketing variables are the choice of music type and volume. This study tests the following hypothesis:

H2: Auditory marketing has a positive influence on customer loyalty.

Olfactory Marketing

The sense of smell is intricately linked to human emotions, and its impact on customer behavior is substantial (Gupta & Mishra, 2020). Smell is connected to feelings and memories, and can therefore be associated with pleasure (Rehman, Fahim, Irshad, & Hussain, 2021). Store odors are certainly a way to attract consumers (Dusauw, Mangantar, & Pandowo, 2023). Olfactory marketing can increase customer loyalty (Chen, Zhang, Zhang, & Zou, 2021). Hussain (2018) found a positive association between olfactory marketing and customer loyalty. The measurement indicators for the olfactory marketing variable were aromas in the shopping area and aromas in the dining area. This study hypothesizes:

H3: Olfactory marketing has a positive influence on customer loyalty.

Tactile Marketing

Human skin contains over 4 million sensory receptors highly sensitive to material, texture, weight, and design (Randhir, Latasha, Tooraiven, & Monishan, 2016). Touch is a sensory factor perceived by the skin (Jang & Lee, 2019), the body's largest sensory organ, skin enables physical connection

through touch (Gupta & Mishra, 2020). By touching a product, consumer behavior and shopping attitudes are significantly and positively influenced (Gupta & Mishra, 2020). Tactile marketing can increase customer loyalty (Chen, Zhang, Zhang, & Zou, 2021). The measurement indicators for tactile marketing variables are furniture selection and tableware selection. This study proposes the following hypothesis:

H4: Tactile marketing has a positive influence on customer loyalty.

Gustatory Marketing

Humans can perceive five essential tastes: sweet, bitter, sour, savory, and salty (Randhir, Latasha, Tooraiven, & Monishan, 2016). The most valuable marketing aspects are those that directly appeal to consumers' sense of taste (Pareek & Jain, 2022). In a highly competitive environment among food marketers, crafting taste experiences that resonate with consumers can drive influential purchasing decisions (Gupta & Mishra, 2020). Tasteful marketing can increase customer loyalty (Chen, Zhang, Zhang, & Zou, 2021). The measurement indicators for tasteful marketing are food and beverage flavors. This study proposes the following hypothesis:

H5: Gustatory marketing has a positive influence on customer loyalty.

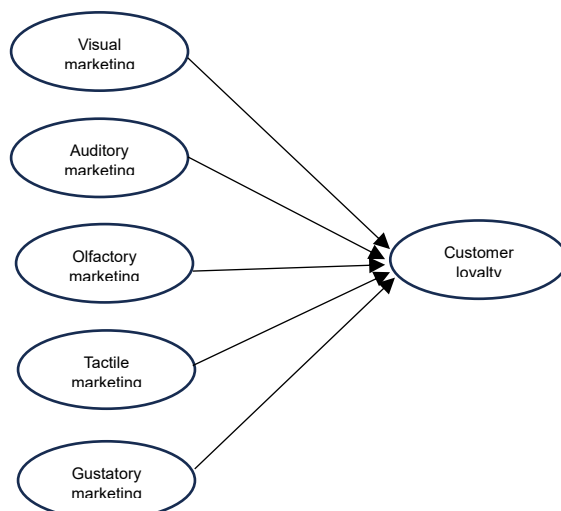


Figure 1. Study Framework (Source: Researcher Scheme)

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a quantitative research design. Visual marketing, auditory, olfactory, tactile, and gustatory marketing were the independent variables, while customer loyalty was the dependent variable.

Data were obtained through an online survey using a Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5 (1 being strongly disagree and 5 being strongly agree). Primary data collected through surveys and secondary data sourced from academic journals and online resources. The number of respondents in this study was 214 people. The sample determination used in this study refers to Roscoe's (1975) (Sekaran, 2006) that in multivariate research, the sample size should be several times (preferably 10 times or more) larger than the number of variables in the study. A purposive sampling method was used, targeting participants who met the following criteria: 1) minimum age 18 years; 2) customers of one of the following minimarkets: FamilyMart or K3Mart in Malang City; 3) consumers who have purchased signature street snacks and signature drinks at FamilyMart or K3Mart in Malang City and enjoyed them in a smoke-free dining area at least 3 times in the last 3 months. The first part of the questionnaire collected basic information about respondents, and the second part investigated the scales used by respondents to evaluate 6 variables. The multisensory marketing questions in the questionnaire were adapted from (Jang & Lee, 2019) while the customer loyalty questions were adapted from (Chen, Zhang, Zhang, & Zou, 2021). For data analysis, multiple regression analysis was used. Data analysis was performed using SPSS Statistics 25 software.

RESULTS

The study was conducted during February 2025. Of the 214 respondents, the majority were female (75.2%), aged 18-22 years (75.2%), had monthly expenses of less than Rp 3,000,000 (82.7%), and were students (61.2%). The most frequently visited store was Family Mart (78.5%), with 3-5 visits in the last 3 months (81.3%), and a visit duration of less than 1

hour per visit (65.0%). The results of demographic statistics are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic Data and General Information

Characteristics	N	%
Gender		
Male	53	24.8
Female	161	75.2
Age (years old)		
18-22	161	75.2
23-27	38	17.8
28-32	5	2.3
33-37	4	1.9
≥38	6	2.8
Monthly Expenses		
< Rp 3.000.000	177	82.7
Rp 3.000.000 – Rp 6.000.000	23	10.7
Rp 6.000.001 – Rp 9.000.000	6	2.8
Rp >9.000.000	8	3.7
Occupation		
Full-time employed	34	15.9
Part-time employed	11	5.1
Self-employed	1	0.5
University Student	131	61.2
Entrepreneur	10	4.7
Other	27	12.6
Frequently visited convenience stores		
Family Mart	168	78.5
K3 Mart	46	21.5
Number of visits in the last 3 months		
3-5 times	174	81.3

6-8 times	28	13.1
≥9 times	12	5.6
Duration per visit		
Less than 1 hour	139	65.0
1-2 hour(s)	64	29.9
More than 2 hours	11	5.1
Total	214	100.0

Source: Processed Primary Data, 2025

The results of the classical assumption test indicate that the assumptions of normality, heteroscedasticity, and multicollinearity are met. The results of the multiple linear regression test on customer loyalty show a significant influence of auditory marketing ($\beta = 0.831$, $p = 0.000$), olfactory marketing ($\beta = 0.548$, $p = 0.000$), and gustative marketing ($\beta = 0.820$, $p = 0.000$), meaning that increasing marketing in these three aspects can significantly increase customer loyalty. The magnitude of the influence on customer loyalty can be explained by 66.3% by these five marketing aspects. The results of the multiple linear regression test are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Multiple Linear Regression Results

Independent Variables	Coef.	T	P	Results
Constanta	5.441	3.389	0.001	
Visual Marketing	-0.021	-0.116	0.908	Rejected
Auditory Marketing	0.831	3.753	0.000	Accepted
Olfactory Marketing	0.548	4.228	0.000	Accepted
Tactile Marketing	0.236	1.465	0.144	Rejected
Gustatory Marketing	0.820	6.144	0.000	Accepted
F test = 81.968, $p=0.000$				
R Square = 0.663				

DISCUSSION

This study identified multisensory influences in the context of the convenience store retail sector. Visual marketing

did not have a significant impact on customer loyalty. This finding is inconsistent with research by Chen, Zhang, Zhang, & Zou (2021), which stated that visual marketing can increase customer loyalty. Although it is known that convenience stores create visual elements for a brand to differentiate itself, the results of this study highlight the need to create trendy colors and interior decorations, as well as display products attractively. Demographic data shows that respondents were mostly female, aged 18 to 22, and were university students. Respondents with these characteristics like things that are visually trendy, tend to be more sociable, and follow the latest trends, thus always being aware of what's trending (Sari & Susanti, 2024).

Auditory marketing has a significant influence on customer loyalty. This means that the more a product provides auditory stimulation in the form of playing the right type of music and at the right volume, the more loyal customers will be, namely, willing to repurchase, provide positive word-of-mouth, and be less likely to switch brands. These research findings align with research by Chen, Zhang, Zhang, & Zou (2021), which states that auditory marketing can increase customer loyalty. Sound has the power to influence mood and purchasing habits (Randhir, Latasha, Tooraiven, & Monishan, 2016). Without sound, visual perception would be different: less contrast, less attention-grabbing, and less informative (Hussain, 2019).

Olfactory marketing has a significant influence on customer loyalty. This means that the more a product provides olfactory stimulation, specifically scenting shopping and dining areas, the more loyal customers will be. These research findings align with research by Hussain (2018), which found a positive association between olfactory marketing and customer loyalty. Furthermore, research by Chen, Zhang, Zhang, & Zou (2021) found that olfactory marketing can increase customer loyalty.

Tactile marketing has no significant impact on customer loyalty. This study's findings contradict those of Chen, Zhang, Zhang, & Zou (2021), which found that tactile marketing can increase customer loyalty. This study highlights the importance

of ensuring comfortable and clean furniture and tableware. The urban and instant concept promoted by these two convenience stores means they serve dishes with disposable tableware, which is certainly not the most convenient to use.

Gustatory marketing has a significant influence on customer loyalty. This means that the more a product stimulates the sense of taste, in the form of delicious and enjoyable food and beverages, the more loyal customers will be, increasing their willingness to repurchase, providing positive word-of-mouth, and being less likely to switch brands. These research findings align with research by Chen, Zhang, Zhang, & Zou (2021), which found that gustatory marketing can increase customer loyalty.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Based on the results and discussion above, it can be concluded that (1) visual marketing does not have a significant effect on customer loyalty; (2) auditory marketing has a significant effect on customer loyalty; (3) olfactory marketing has a significant effect on customer loyalty; (4) tactile marketing does not have a significant effect on customer loyalty; (5) gustatory marketing has a significant effect on customer loyalty.

Therefore, it is hoped that some of the research findings can be applied by marketers as a means of understanding consumer behavior, particularly as it relates to customer loyalty. Suggestions for further research include examining the effect of multisensory marketing on customer loyalty in other sectors, such as repair shops, beauty salons, or tourist attractions. The addition of independent variables is also recommended for further research.

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