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From awareness to action: Linking sensory marketing with green purchase intentions

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Abstract

The present study explores the impact of sensory marketing on consumers' green purchase intentions, emphasizing how multisensory experiences influence sustainable buying behaviour. Despite growing awareness of environmental issues, a significant gap persists between consumers' positive attitudes and their actual green purchasing behaviour. This research addresses that gap by empirically examining how sensory cues-sight, sound, smell, touch, and taste-affect consumers' intentions to purchase eco-friendly products, particularly in the organic cosmetics sector.

The study adopts a causal research design and uses both primary and secondary data. Primary data were collected from 400 respondents through a structured questionnaire containing ten statements, employing a purposive sampling technique. Reliability analysis yielded a Cronbach's alpha of 0.789, indicating satisfactory internal consistency. Correlation analysis revealed a strong positive relationship ($r = 0.537, p < 0.01$) between sensory marketing and green purchase intention. Regression analysis confirmed that sensory marketing significantly influences green purchase intention, explaining 19.3 percent of the variance ($R^2 = 0.193$). The regression coefficient ($\beta = 0.625$) further indicates that a one-unit increase in sensory marketing leads to a corresponding 0.625-unit rise in green purchase intention. The findings demonstrate that sensory marketing substantially enhances consumers' confidence, emotional attachment, and willingness to buy green products. The study concludes that integrating sensory cues into green marketing strategies can effectively promote sustainable consumer behaviour. Future research may include longitudinal and gender-comparative approaches to strengthen the understanding of evolving green consumption patterns.

Keywords: Sensory marketing, green purchase intention, five senses, green marketing

1. Introduction

Environmental discourse has changed significantly over the past 20 years; early sustainability initiatives in the 1960s focused primarily on pollution control and energy conservation (Adams, 2001) ^[1]. The concept of green consumption emerged during this time (Kim & Ko, 2012) ^[29], but consumer environmental ethics have undergone significant refinement and expansion. In this regard, sustainable purchasing behaviour has been acknowledged as a critical mechanism for addressing environmental degradation (Joshi & Jin, 2017) ^[31].

A unique consumer sector known as "green consumers" has emerged as a result of increased environmental awareness. These customers are distinguished by their conscious avoidance of goods that could pose a risk to their health, have a negative impact on the environment throughout the course of their lifecycle, or generate an excessive amount of trash (Ali *et al.*, 2011; do Paço & Raposo, 2009; Raposo *et al.*, 2008) ^[4, 15, 43]. Even with growing environmental awareness, it is still difficult to convert favourable attitudes into real green purchasing behaviour. According to earlier studies, eco-friendly products' higher prices and restricted suitability for long-standing consumer behaviours sometimes serve as major obstacles (Rahman & Nguyen-Viet, 2023) ^[42]. Furthermore, research indicates that consumers usually place a higher value on familiarity, convenience, and perceived performance of conventional alternatives than on environmental concerns alone, which may not be enough to guarantee green purchasing (Ahmed *et al.*, 2023) ^[2].

In this regard, using the five human senses-sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch-sensory marketing has become more well-known as a tactical method of influencing consumer behaviour.

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Sensory marketing has the ability to improve consumer-brand connections and create long-lasting brand attachment by producing immersive and emotionally impactful consuming experiences (Ifeanyichukwu & Peter, 2018) [25]. Additionally, by matching sensory cues with consumer expectations, sensory stimuli help brands communicate value propositions more successfully and increase buy intentions.

Green consumer behaviour and sensory marketing have both garnered increasing scholarly attentions, but they have mostly been studied as distinct research areas. Previous research primarily looks at sensory factors in traditional consumption contexts or concentrates on the cognitive and attitudinal factors that drive green purchase separately. As a result, nothing is known empirically about how sensory marketing may influence consumers' intentions to make green purchases. In order to close this gap and provide a more comprehensive understanding of sustainable consumer behaviour, the current study aims to investigate experimentally how sensory marketing affects customers' intentions to make green purchases.

1.1 Sensory Marketing

The importance of human senses in influencing consumer recall, emotional reactions, and long-lasting brand associations is highlighted by sensory marketing. Lindstrom (2005) [32] asserts that sensory inputs serve as an essential conduit between people and their surroundings, promoting the development of memories that in turn direct behavioural reactions. Persuasive and immersive communication that can affect consumer expectations, attitudes, and purchase intentions is the goal of experiential marketing, which goes beyond conventional marketing strategies that prioritise functional qualities and utilitarian benefits (Schmitt, 2000) [46]. The intentional coordination of sensory inputs to positively influence consumer perceptions, assessments, and behavioural results is the conceptualisation of sensory marketing within this framework (Hinestrosa & James, 2014; Nghiêm-Phú, 2017) [23, 38]. Brands can improve advertising memory, fortify brand images, and significantly impact consumer behaviour by appealing to many senses at once. This leads to extended consumption and stronger brand-consumer interactions (Caruntu & Dițoiu, 2014; Hinestrosa & James, 2014) [7, 23].

It is generally accepted that visual stimuli have the greatest influence among the different sensory dimensions. Colour, shape, size, and packaging design are important factors that influence how people perceive quality, evaluate prices, and decide whether to buy (Hultén, 2011; Spence, 2012) [24, 48]. Colours have symbolic meanings and connotations; for example, green is frequently associated with organic qualities, sustainability, and nature. However, research indicates that unless accompanied with reliable signals like eco-labels, visual cues might not be enough to convey environmental friendliness (Pancer *et al.*, 2017) [40]. Additionally, colour perception is not consistent and is influenced by age, gender, and cultural background, which results in varying customer reactions (Citrin *et al.*, 2003) [12]. Since sounds like music, jingles, slogans, and noises associated with products affect consumer perceptions and emotional responses, auditory cues are equally essential to brand communication (Hultén, 2011) [24]. According to studies on sound symbolism, aural signals and the phonetic features of brand names influence consumers' expectations

and assessments of products (Spence, 2012; Graakjaer & Bonde, 2018) [48, 20]. Functional sounds, such as the snap of a cosmetic cap or the spray of an aerosol, function as indicators of quality, safety, and performance in the setting of personal care goods, influencing customer confidence and buy intention (Fauzi & Hashim, 2015; Spence, 2012) [17, 48].

Olfactory cues are especially important for personal care and cosmetic products since they have a significant impact on emotions, memory retention, and brand recall (Hultén, 2011; Schifferstein, 2006) [24, 45]. While strong aromas may arouse feelings of artificiality or lower quality, mild and pleasant fragrances are frequently linked to naturalness and higher quality (Citrin *et al.*, 2003) [12]. Olfactory stimuli must be consistent with other sensory cues, especially visual components, to guarantee positive brand evaluations because sensory incongruence might result in unfavourable customer reactions (Joshi & Rahman, 2015) [26]. Thus, in the cosmetics industry, fragrance is crucial for fostering emotional attachment and brand recognition (Hennigs *et al.*, 2013) [22].

According to Peck and Childers (2003) [41] and Van Horen and Mussweiler (2014) [51], the sensation of touch plays a crucial role in lowering uncertainty by boosting perceived ownership, trust, and confidence while making purchases. Customers evaluate product qualities including texture, weight, and material quality through tactile engagement, giving businesses a competitive edge in marketplaces with high levels of competition (Klatzky & Peck, 2012) [30]. Particularly in product categories like cosmetics, where sensory reassurance is crucial, consumers with a high desire for touch rely more on haptic information (Peck & Childers, 2003) [41].

Lastly, even though taste has historically been seen as having less significance in cosmetic products, its significance is steadily growing as new flavours and edible cosmetics are developed. Olfaction and taste perception are intimately related, with smell playing a significant role in the total flavour experience (Lindstrom, 2005) [32]. In order to enhance emotional appeal, sensory satisfaction, and customer engagement, cosmetic brands are increasingly using natural tastes to create enjoyable multisensory experiences, even for goods that are not meant to be consumed.

1.2 Green Purchase Intention

The willingness of customers to acquire goods or services that support sustainability and are friendly to the environment is known as "green purchase intention" (Zhuang *et al.*, 2021) [53]. Based on the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), customers who care about the environment are more inclined to make green purchases because they believe that such actions are good for the environment (Costa *et al.*, 2021) [13]. Consumers are motivated to support eco-friendly products by positive green attitudes that are shaped by subjective standards, such as social pressure and societal expectations (Kautish & Sharma, 2019) [28]. Perceptions of a product's environmental features, such as energy efficiency, recyclability, use of natural or organic materials, and environmental certifications, impact consumers' intentions to make green purchases (Trivedi *et al.*, 2018; Kautish & Sharma, 2019; Zhuang *et al.*, 2021; Wang *et al.*, 2023) [49, 28, 53, 52]. TRA asserts that these intentions are significantly shaped by attitudes and values

regarding environmental issues, especially for those that incorporate sustainability into their daily lives (Costa *et al.*, 2021; Zhuang *et al.*, 2021) [13, 53]. Peer pressure, media exposure, and social norms are examples of social factors that have a big impact on consumers' green views and, in turn, their intentions to make green purchases (Liu *et al.*, 2020) [33]. Green purchase intentions can be increased by positive social reinforcement and perceived benefits of green items, such as health benefits and environmental protection, which can exceed perceived barriers like higher prices or inconvenience (Costa *et al.*, 2021) [13]. Perceived preparedness, environmental concern, social pressure, economic and emotional value, and environmental awareness are some of the antecedents of green purchase intention that have been found in recent studies (Arli *et al.*, 2018; Naalchi Kashi, 2020; Ruangkanjanases *et al.*, 2020; Joshi *et al.*, 2021; Costa *et al.*, 2021) [6, 37, 44, 27, 13].

1.3 Sensory marketing and green purchase intention

Due to growing environmental concerns, increased health consciousness, and strict international environmental rules, green products have become more and more popular in recent years (Chen, 2008; Chen & Chang, 2012; Alniacik & Yilmaz, 2012; Tseng & Hung, 2013) [10, 11, 5, 50]. Most people believe that these items are safe, organic, ecologically sustainable, and good for human health. However, because definitions and interpretations differ among people and product categories, consumers frequently continue to be perplexed about the true meaning, characteristics, and advantages of green products despite their increasing availability (Cervellon & Carey, 2011) [8]. Green behaviour refers to practices like recycling and eco-purchasing that are intended to lessen the influence on the environment, whereas green products are often defined as those that are produced with little damage to land, water, and air resources (Shrum *et al.*, 1995) [47]. Green management methods are being used by businesses to improve trust, corporate image, and competitive advantage as a result of consumers' increased motivation to spend in an environmentally responsible manner. Based on the Theory of Planned Behaviour, green purchase intention measures customers' propensity and readiness to select eco-friendly items over traditional ones (Ajzen, 1991) [3]. According to earlier research, purchase intention is a crucial concept for marketers looking to encourage green consumption and a powerful predictor of actual purchasing behaviour (Han *et al.*, 2009) [21].

However, a number of obstacles prevent people from making green purchases, such as high costs, a lack of product knowledge, inexperience, and doubts about green claims (Gleim *et al.*, 2013; Ottman *et al.*, 2006) [19, 39]. Effective verbal, visual, and informational cues-such as eco-labels, packaging, and thorough product descriptions-have been shown to greatly improve consumer comprehension and confidence in green products in order to overcome these obstacles (Delmas & Grant, 2014; Kim *et al.*, 2012) [14, 29]. Customers' opinions and assessments of eco-friendly items are greatly influenced by sensory signals. According to Xue and Muralidharan (2015) and Magnier and Schoormans (2015) [34], visual components, packaging aesthetics, eco-labels, and green imagery all improve emotional involvement and have a favourable impact on attitudes

towards sustainable products. Consumer involvement, perceived quality, and readiness to pay more for green products are further reinforced by olfactory cues, tactile inputs, and multisensory product experiences (Fiore *et al.*, 2000; Citrin *et al.*, 2003) [18, 12]. Furthermore, functional, emotional, social, and symbolic values all have an impact on green consumption in addition to environmental advantages. Customers look for both non-green and green benefits, such as social standing, quality, dependability, and health (Dsouza *et al.*, 2006; Maniatis, 2015) [16, 35]. Green buying intention is increased when self-oriented and social advantages are communicated through sensory and experiential elements. Overall, research indicates that by appealing to both emotional and logical judgements, combining sensory marketing signals with green product communication can raise green buy intention, improve experiential value, and lessen customer scepticism.

2. Research gap

While there has been a growing body of research on the impact of sensory marketing on consumer behaviour, there remains a dearth of empirical studies that specifically examine the sensory marketing strategies employed to promote environmentally sustainable or "green" products. The bulk of sensory marketing research has historically centred on conventional products, leaving a notable gap in our understanding of how to effectively leverage sensory marketing in the context of eco-friendly offerings.

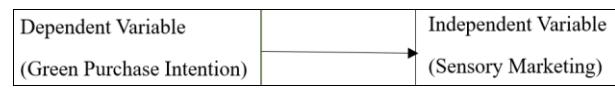
3. Objectives: To assess the impact of sensory marketing on people's green purchase intention.

4. Research hypothesis

4.1 H₀: "There is no significant impact of sensory marketing on green purchase intention."

5. Research methodology

The study's design is causal in nature because the primary goal of the study is to assess the impact of sensory marketing on people's green purchase intention. The study's sample size is 400, and a purposive sampling technique was employed. In the study, both sources of data collection were used; primary data was gathered from respondents via a questionnaire (consisting of ten statements). Secondary data was gathered through reports, articles, websites, and so on. The current study has two variables: independent variables (Sensory Marketing) and dependent variables (Green purchase Intention). Correlation and Multiple Regression Techniques were used to analyze the data.



Source: The author(s)

Fig 1: Conceptual Framework of the study

Model

The regression model used in the study is $Y = \alpha + \beta X + \epsilon$

Where sensory marketing is the predictor (X)

Green Purchase is the outcome variable (Y)

α, β = coefficient

ϵ = Error Term

6. Results and interpretation

Table 1: Statistics of Reliability

Cronbach's Alpha	No. of Items
0.789	10

(Source: The Author)

Table 1 illustrates how Cronbach's alpha is used to measure ten items in total. The questionnaire's internal consistency and stability are assessed using Cronbach's alpha. The range of the alpha value is 0 to 1. There is internal coherence in the design if the alpha value is nearer 1. Alpha values above 0.9 are regarded as exceptional, while those between 0.8 and less than 0.9 are regarded as good. The alpha value, which gauges internal consistency, came out to be 0.789 in our examination. Since this score is higher than the suggested cut-off points of 0.7, we can be confident in the questionnaire's reliability and correctness.

Table 2: Correlation Analysis

	Sensory Marketing	Green Purchase Intention
Sensory Marketing	1	.537***
Sig value (two-tailed) No.	100	.000
Green Purchase Intention	.537***	1
Sig value (two-tailed) No.	.000	100

Source: The author(s)

*** The correlation has a significant value of 0.01 at a two-tailed level.

The correlation analysis clearly indicates a robust link between sensory marketing and green purchase intention, with a correlation coefficient of 53.7% and a significance level of 1%. It is evident that sensory marketing plays a pivotal role in driving green purchase behavior.

Table 3: Model summary

Model	Value of R	Value of R ²	Value of Adjusted R ²	Std. Error of the estimated
1	0.439	0.193	0.184	0.77115

Source: The author(s)

*Predictor (Constant), Sensory Marketing

According to the R² value in table 3, the independent variable (predictive variable) has an effect on the dependent variable. The R² value is 0.193, indicating that 19.3% of the variance of the variable is specific to the business perspective, that is, the business perspective plays an important role in 18.4% of the green product purchasing variance.

Table 4: ANOVA

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean of Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	12.148	1	14.007	23.554	0.000*
Residual	37.894	98	.597		
Total	50.042	99			

Source: The author(s)

*Predictor (Constant), Sensory Marketing

Dependent Variable: Green Purchase Intention

The ANOVA table presented above displays the statistical

analysis of the data. The p-value, represented in the last column, has been calculated to be.000. This indicates that the R² value is significant, meaning that the predictor variables in the model have a strong influence on the response variable.

Table 5: Coefficients

Model	B	Standard Error	β	Value of t	Sig. value
1 (constant)	3.421	0.214		5.766	0.000
Sensory Marketing	0.625	0.067	0.545	7.694	0.000

Source: The author(s)

Dependent Variable: Green Purchase Intention

The table 5 depicts the effects of sensory marketing on green purchase intention. The coefficient of sensory marketing is positive 0.625 in this case, indicating a direct association between green purchase intention and sensory marketing. Additionally, The B value is 0.625 which indicates that with the increase in the value of sensory marketing 1 unit green purchase intention increases by 0.625 units. This association is significant statistically because the t-computed value is 7.694.

7. Findings and discussion

The study's goal was to investigate the impact of sensory marketing on green purchase intention. First-hand data was gathered through questionnaires using purposive sampling, and the results were drawn from these questionnaires. The study's findings conclude that there is a positive relationship between sensory marketing and green purchase intention, so our hypothesis that sensory marketing has no significant impact on green purchase intention is rejected. The predicted relationship is accepted by both the literature and the study's calculated data, namely, sensory marketing and green purchase intention have a significant link, which means that a 1% increase in sensory marketing will result in a 19.3% increase in green purchase intention. As a result, sensory marketing increases the purchasing intention of organic cosmetics. According to previous research, consumers face a number of challenges when it comes to identifying and purchasing green products. The use of sensory cues in green product marketing has proven to be a significant idea in increasing consumer confidence in green purchasing. Sensory insights not only reveal the competitive characteristics of products to consumers but also increase their intent to purchase a product.

8. Limitations and Future Directions

The study has made a valuable contribution to the literature on green purchasing behavior. However, as with any research, there are some limitations that can be addressed in future studies. For example, using longitudinal designs would allow researchers to track changes in consumers' attitudes and intentions over time. Additionally, while the study collected useful data from female consumers of organic cosmetics, there is still a need to investigate the green purchasing intentions of male consumers. By including both genders in future research, we can gain a more complete understanding of the factors that influence sustainable consumption behaviors.

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