

THE ROLE OF MULTI-SENSORY MARKETING ACROSS LUXURY BRANDS: ENHANCING CONSUMER EXPERIENCE AND BRAND RELATIONSHIP

Weerasuriya A.B¹, Silva S.B², Fernando M.U.K³, Sandaruwan K.A.P⁴, Umesha Dabare⁵, Nirmani Dayapathirana⁶

Abstract

This research investigates multi-sensory marketing's ability to transform of consumer experience and strengthen the brand-consumer relationship in the luxury industry. These brands purposefully merge sensory stimuli across sight, sound, smell, touch, and taste to create immersive experiences that foster emotional attachment, sensory brand engagement, and ultimately loyalty to a brand. This study aims to synthesise findings regarding the influence of multi-sensory marketing on consumer perception, behaviours, and self-expression through a systematic review of 34 peer-reviewed articles published between 2012 and 2025. Key variables related to how sensory brand engagements and brand loyalty influence brand equity as mediators were examined. The research further highlights contextual influences, such as cultural differences and product categories, which can modify the effectiveness of sensory marketing strategies. The implications provide usable insights for luxury brands to create sustainable, genuine, culturally relevant sensory marketing strategies that can enhance consumer-brand connections and facilitate longer-term brand loyalty. This research contributes to improving theoretical understanding and gives actionable recommendations for marketers looking to exploit multi-sensory marketing in competitive luxury markets.

Keywords: Brand Loyalty, Brand Equity, Consumer Experience, Emotional Attachment, Multi-Sensory Marketing, Luxury Brands, Sensory Brand Engagement, Sustainability, Virtual Reality

¹Sri Lanka Institute of Information Technology
Email: BM22500830@my.sliit.lk

²Lanka Institute of Information Technology
Email: BM22517456@my.sliit.lk

³Sri Lanka Institute of Information Technology
Email: BM22514240@my.sliit.lk

⁴Sri Lanka Institute of Information Technology
Email: BM22573728@my.sliit.lk

⁵Sri Lanka Institute of Information Technology
Email: umesha.d@sliit.lk*

⁶Sri Lanka Institute of Information Technology
Email: nirmani.d@sliit.lk



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Introduction

In the competitive luxury branding landscape, multi-sensory marketing has emerged as a key strategy to optimise consumer experience and cultivate our brand relationship. Luxury brands are creating experiences that target our multiple senses (sight, sound, scent, touch, and taste) to create immersive moments that generate a significantly more personal and evocative experience to foster stronger emotional attachment, brand loyalty, and self-expression (Petit, 2019; Sanyaphirak, 2020). Studies suggest that sensory cues have a direct effect on purchasing behaviour in the short term, while also enhancing long-term brand equity through the factors of trust, engagement, and consumer identity (Krishna, 2017; Hepola, 2017). New advancements in digital and virtual technologies have further enhanced multi-sensory engagement, offering luxury brands greater distance to deliver immersive, novel experiences through virtual realities and digital platforms (Jung, 2021; Petit, 2019). Nevertheless, substantial gaps remain regarding sensory marketing's contextual effectiveness between sociocultural contexts and product categories, as well as sensory congruence for effective overload or perceived inauthenticity (Jhamb, 2020). Identifying these barriers holds opportunities for developing tailored, sustainable, and culturally resonant sensory marketing frameworks for a wide range of luxury consumer segments across the world. In response to these gaps, we propose an innovative integrative framework which brings together Sensory Marketing Theory and Self-Expansion Theory in one single model, which has not been attempted before in the luxury brand literature. The framework explains how multi-sensory brand stimuli shape emotional attachment, leading to self-expansion, and examines how gender and store image moderate these relationships. Previous studies have only examined single senses or limited cultural contexts. Our study constructs a model to examine the understanding of multi-sensory integration, adapting it cross-culturally, and includes identity-based consumer psychology in the Sri Lankan Gen-Z luxury perfume context.

Literature Review

Multi-sensory marketing

Multi-sensory marketing engages consumers through sight, sound, smell, touch, and taste to create immersive brand experiences that affect perceptions, behaviours, and memories. (Krishna, 2012) discusses sensory elements as improvements to sensory memory and helps to deepen emotional connections to the brand. Wiedmann (2017) also extends this argument, asserting that sensory elements serve to promote consumer engagement and brand loyalty. Brands utilise visual stimuli, olfactory cues, and auditory signals such as music to convey meanings, including exclusivity and quality, and move consumers toward emotional connections and identity enactment (Spence, 2014; Petit, 2019; Verhoef, 2015). Sensory communication can inspire consumer engagement and develop a psychological connection with strong brand equity when done strategically (Krishna, 2012; Wiedmann, 2017).

Multi-sensory marketing in luxury brand contexts

Luxury goods are sold in an experience economy where the consumption process is equally, if not more, significant than the luxury product itself. In luxury retail, sensory marketing has been utilised to intentionally engage different senses to influence perceptions, assessments, and behaviours of consumers in order to create an emotional connection and differentiate the brand in the market (Shahid, 2022). This strategy elevates consumption from functioning strictly as a means to produce value toward existential emotional experiences reflecting symbolism, exclusivity, and attachment. Empirical research has demonstrated that sensory marketing can deliberately enhance branded experiences and create brand loyalty, which is consistent with inference theory that explains how cues in the environment influence perceptions of quality and patronage theory that explains how sensory cues increase the frequency of customers returning to visit or purchase again.

Luxury retailers use inherent characteristics like craftsmanship and aesthetic sensibilities to create sensory-rich retail stores. Visual components, textures to touch, ambient odours, and soundscapes are intentionally put in place to signify authenticity, exclusivity, and value. Tactile properties such as the weightiness of materials signify competence, and soft surfaces represent warmth; both factors impact social impression and the purchase decision and build a relationship with the consumer and the brand. According to Li (2025), the multisensory and structural brand experiences operate via mental imagery that increases the perceived authenticity of brands by creating either a cognitive or affective response. Sensory stimuli contribute to emotional encoding of memory, decreased cognitive dissonance, and increased emotional engagement, leading to increased perceived authenticity. Ambient scents have been noted to have an impact on proximity to products, purchase intentions, appetite, and desirability within retail contexts (Villar, 2020). The results underscore the importance of the strategic component of sensory orchestration in luxury brand management.

Impact of multi-sensory marketing on consumer experience

The consumer experience in luxury markets is inherently multidimensional, involving sensory, affective, cognitive, and behavioural dimensions. Sensory marketing harnesses numerous sensory cues to stimulate pleasure, arousal, and immersion that enhance consumers' cognitive evaluations of a brand, which ultimately affect the formation of purchase intention and brand loyalty (Krishna, 2012; Hultén, 2011). The effect of both sensory cue combinations, particularly olfactory cues known to evoke vivid autobiographical memories, with tactile cues produced from premium materials, enhances emotional connection, resulting in increased brand satisfaction, memorability, and attachment. This empirical research examines how sensory brand experience impacts brand loyalty by exploring emotional and cognitive mediators that facilitate strong relationships between brands and customers. Visual and auditory elements cumulatively modulate consumer emotional responses and behaviours in retail environments. Notably, retailers can curate soundscapes to influence in-store tempo, pace, and duration (Krishna, 2012). It is important to note that sensory congruence across sensory, cognitive, and behavioural dimensions minimises cognitive load, promotes perceived authenticity, and implicitly builds consumers' trust (Krishna, 2014). This research demonstrates a beneficial role of sensory marketing cues in improving brand experiences, emotional connection with the brand, and brand loyalty in the field of luxury retail (Shahid, 2022). Moreover, positive emotional contagion in immersive retail or brand environments improves brand value perceptions and consumer willingness to pay a higher price (Hagtvedt, 2016). Affective transfer deepens emotional attachment, with sensory congruence working collectively to reinforce cognitive assessments of brand dependability and forming the foundation for long-term brand loyalty and advocacy behaviours (Hultén, 2011; Wiedmann, 2017). Through repeated and reconciled stimulus exposure, the cumulative effects of positive affective experiences create emotional associations that are instrumental in enabling repeated and sustained brand loyalty to luxury items.

Sensory marketing and brand relationship outcomes

Sensory marketing utilises the intentional employment of sensory stimuli to shape perception and behaviour by tapping into factors that extend beyond the product's functional characteristics (Krishna, 2016). Specifically, brands seek to engage in multiple senses at once to develop more significant and immersive experiences. Such affective experiences develop emotional connections that shape consumer intentions to behave and, more importantly, to develop attachment, trust, and loyalty. Research shows that congruent sensory cues, visual, auditory, and olfactory, enhance consumer trust and reinforce persuasion by facilitating engagement with the consumer and the advertisement (Krishna, 2014; Hultén, 2011). In addition to congruency, tactile and haptic attributes of product design also enhance quality perception and consumer commitment (Breneman, 2022).

In the realm of luxury branding, these sensory experiences help to develop identity-based consumer relationships, with the interactions with the brand tied into self-concept (Zha, 2025; Safeer, 2021). Developments in immersive and digital technology, including virtual reality, have expanded sensory marketing to the online realm, allowing for multi-sensory experiences that provide simulated sensory experiences that reaffirm the credibility of a brand and provide outreach access to a wider audience (Petit, 2019). Touchpoints through the senses can be pivotal moments in which brands can foster a lasting emotional and psychological bond with consumers. When these sensory moments are designed systematically across various channels, they augment consumers' feelings of brand closeness and attachment, which facilitates loyalty and advocacy over time (Singh & Crisafulli, 2020).

Contextual factors and considerations

Many contextual factors, including the type of product, culture, and retail environment, affect multi-sensory marketing strategies for luxury brands. The author Villar (2020) explains that, in addition, brand usage and usage for a product can also affect the delivery of potential sensory cues. As Jhamb (2020) highlights, sensory cultures vary by market, which means marketers should develop culturally adaptive sensory marketing plans. Retail elements, along with the addition of sensory experiences, particularly in a digital context, can foster brand engagement but can also create challenges such as sensory overload and incongruence. According to Petit (2019), virtual and augmented reality applications with good design could increase the authenticity of a brand and improve brand engagement. However, tactile, olfactory, and auditory sensory elements are not universally effective (Krishna, 2017; Morrin, 2021; Petit, 2019). Marketers must consider the strategic deployment of sensory elements to enhance uniqueness while remaining culturally authentic, while also managing the risk to brand equity (Hepola, 2017; Safeer, 2021). At the core of sensory digital marketing is sustainability, with emerging technologies providing avenues for environmentally conscious sensory interactions throughout the consumer experience (Zha, 2025; Jung, 2021).

Research gaps

Existing research highlights a strong positive effect of multisensory marketing on consumer experience, sensory brand engagement, and brand loyalty in luxury markets (Hepola, 2017; Wiedmann, 2017). However, scholars emphasise that the field still requires further empirical and theoretical development, particularly in understanding how different sensory cues can be effectively combined and utilised across various luxury categories (Villar, 2020). The interaction of sensory intensity, congruence, and contextual fit in fostering long-lasting brand connections has been insufficiently explored, especially within the shifting dynamics of digital retail environments (Spence, 2014).

There is also a notable gap in research related to the influence of rapidly evolving digital technologies, such as virtual and augmented reality, on multisensory experiences and luxury brand perceptions (Jung, 2021; Petit, 2019). Despite widespread evidence that sensory perception and consumer behaviour vary significantly across markets, cross-cultural perspectives remain underrepresented in existing studies (Jhamb, 2020). This gap limits understanding of how sensory marketing should be adapted to balance global brand consistency with local cultural relevance (Zha, 2025).

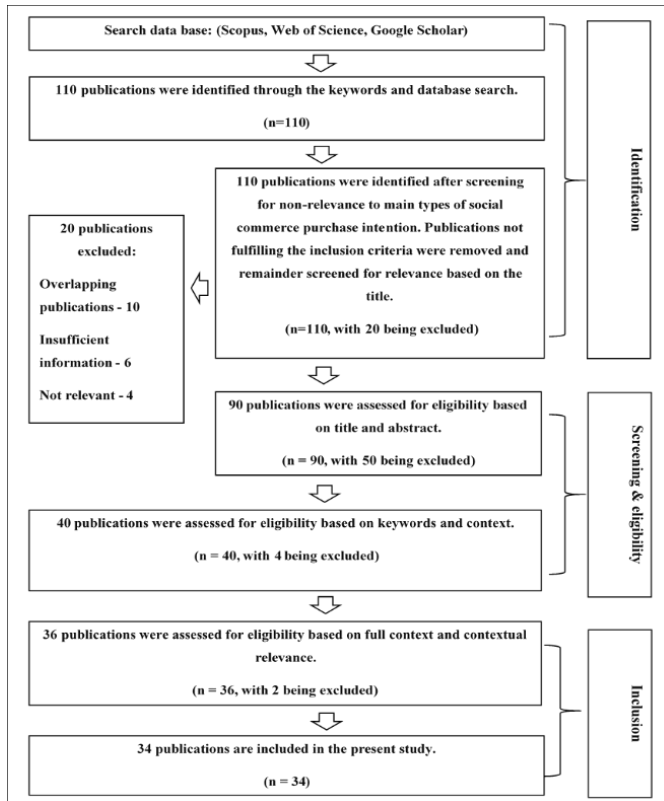
Further gaps exist in research on the specific roles of individual sensory cues—including tactile packaging elements, olfactory branding, auditory atmospherics, and taste—in shaping holistic sensory brand experiences and enhancing brand equity (Krishna, 2017). In addition, the mediating influence of consumers' emotional and cognitive processes on multisensory effects remains insufficiently examined (Hepola, 2017). Sustainability as a strategic and ethical component of sensory marketing is also in its early stages of scholarly attention, with initial insights suggesting potential links between virtual sensory experiences and environmentally responsible consumer behaviour (Zha, 2025; Jung, 2021).

Finally, there is limited theoretical work addressing how multisensory marketing shapes consumer identity, self-expression, and authentic brand attachment, particularly within digital and hybrid online–offline consumption environments (Safeer, 2021). This research responds to these gaps through a systematic synthesis of recent empirical findings and the development of an integrative framework that incorporates cultural context, sensory congruence, sustainability considerations, and digital engagement. By doing so, it enhances understanding of how luxury brands may strategically utilise multisensory marketing to strengthen culturally grounded consumer–brand relationships.

Methodology

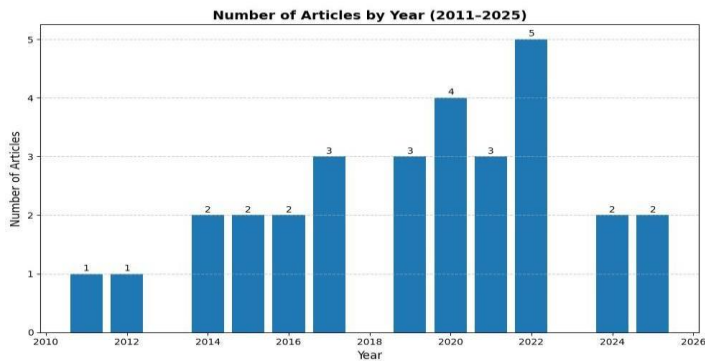
This paper systematically reviewed and revised 30 articles (2012-2025) on multi-sensory marketing in the context of luxury brands. All articles reviewed were peer-reviewed. The review team undertook searches through Scopus, Science Direct and Google Scholar with relevant keywords such as Articles that were duplicates and those that were not relevant were identified and removed by the review team before screening all other articles. “Multi-Sensory Marketing”, “Sensory Brand Engagement”, “Brand Loyalty”, “Consumer Experience” and related synonyms. Rather than following the more formal dual independent review protocols, screening was performed by the authors using established relevance criteria consistently. Data extraction was performed on the study aim, methods, sensory marketing techniques, and consumer outcomes, and the data were synthesised qualitatively. The steps involved in the review process are displayed in a PRISMA flow diagram for transparency in Figure 1. Accordingly, further analysis was carried out to provide a comprehensive overlook of the articles referred to in the review paper based on publication year and the country-wise.

Figure 1
PRISMA flow diagram



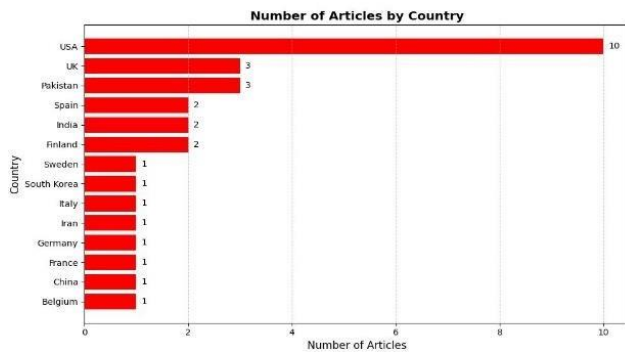
(Source: Authors' Compilation)

Figure 2
Publication Year of Articles Reviewed



(Source: Authors' Compilation)

Figure 3
Reviewed Articles by Country of Origin



(Source: Authors' Compilation)

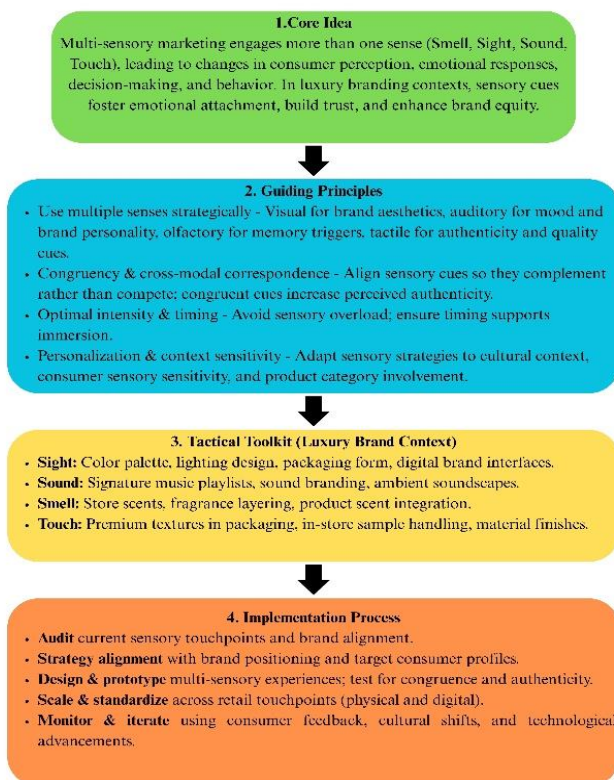
Discussion

This research provides valuable insights into effective multi-sensory marketing for luxury brands, particularly emphasising the importance of cultural sensitivity and digital innovation. The findings demonstrate that, unlike generalised approaches, sensory marketing must be culturally specific to generate authentic emotional connections, build stronger brand loyalty, and support consumer identity (Shahid, 2022; Park, 2024). Aligning sensory cues with luxury brand values enhances culturally meaningful engagement across global markets, as cultural value orientations significantly shape consumer perceptions of luxury value, prestige, and uniqueness (Anastasia Stathopoulou, 2019).

Furthermore, the incorporation of emerging digital technologies—such as augmented reality, virtual reality, and immersive digital tools—extends sensory marketing beyond physical environments. These technologies enable luxury brands to create immersive digital experiences, but they must be designed carefully to avoid sensory overload or incongruence that may compromise brand authenticity. Recent evidence shows that intelligent technologies (AI-driven tools, personalised features, virtual mirrors, etc.) and interactive digital environments enhance perceptions of brand personality and increase purchase intentions, particularly among status-seeking consumers (Sestino, 2024). Collectively, the findings support an adaptive sensory marketing framework that balances cultural relevance with technological innovation to strengthen long-term consumer-brand relationships.

Figure 4

Multisensory Marketing Framework



(Source: Authors' Compilation)

Conclusion and Future Directions

This study deepens theoretical understanding by integrating multi-sensory marketing effects across various senses within luxury consumption contexts, highlighting cultural and digital dimensions that are often overlooked in existing literature (Shahid, 2022; Park, 2024). Methodologically, the research contributes a robust systematic review that can serve as a foundation for future empirical studies examining the behavioural outcomes of sensory marketing in hybrid retail environments. Practically, the framework developed in this research guides luxury marketers to design sensory touchpoints that combine cultural insight with advanced digital tools to promote authenticity, sustainability, and emotional engagement. By adopting this balanced approach, luxury brands are better positioned to remain competitive and cultivate sustainable consumer loyalty.

in the face of rapidly evolving market dynamics.

Future studies should examine how sensory cues can be combined and utilised across different luxury categories, particularly focusing on sensory intensity, congruence, and contextual fit in digital retail environments. As virtual and augmented reality technologies advance, longitudinal research is needed to understand their impact on brand attitude and loyalty among digital-native luxury consumers. There is also a lack of cross-cultural perspectives in sensory marketing, despite evidence that sensory perception varies across markets. More research is required to build culturally adaptive sensory marketing frameworks that balance global brand consistency with local relevance. Further investigation is needed into the roles of individual sensory cues and the emotional and cognitive processes that mediate multisensory effects. Sustainability remains underexplored, though early findings suggest that virtual sensory experiences may encourage environmentally responsible consumption behaviours. Finally, new theoretical models are needed to explain how multisensory marketing influences consumer identity, self-expression, and authentic brand attachment, particularly within digital and hybrid online–offline contexts.

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