

RETAILERS TOOLS: THE SENSORY APPROACHES

¹SUKRITI CHANDHOK

¹Student, Amity School of Design, Amity University, Noida

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ABSTRACT

Designing for the senses is essential for luxury brands' retail spaces because it can help customers have a memorable and immersive experience. High-quality, hand-picked products that appeal to the senses, such as sight, touch, smell, taste, and sound, are frequently associated with luxury brands. Luxury brands can create a unique and engaging shopping experience that differentiates them from their competitors and helps to increase sales by designing spaces that accommodate to these senses.

Enhanced brand perception is also attainable through sensory experiences. For instance, to highlight the quality of their goods, high-end fashion firms may use tactile fabrics like silk, leather, or cashmere. To boost the appearance of their products, they may also add scents, such as those from candles or perfumes. Another element is the display, which feature products presented attractively and sensibly to convey a sense of exclusivity and elegance. When introducing new collections, luxury firms often rely on retail displays. These displays intend to highlight the special qualities and advantages of these unique items while also enhancing the overall image and core values of the brand. This paper explores how luxury brands use sensory experiences such as sight and touch to establish a more personal connection with their customers and enhance brand perception using a case.

Keywords: *Luxury, Sensory experiences, Retail, Branding, Design*

INTRODUCTION

Luxury brands are typically associated with premium products, unforgettable experiences, and high prices as a result, creating visually appealing and hypnotic retail displays which help in connecting the brand's unique value intentions, establishing an emotional connection with the consumer, and distinguishing the brand from its competitors.

Luxury brands primarily rely on unique selling points such as unique ambiances, superior craftsmanship, materials, and innovative designs. These points convey to the consumer how the brands cater to and pamper them, making them feel special. Every retail environment reflects the brand's exclusivity and values. A brand's retail space is the primary medium for displaying its products and collections in an aesthetically pleasing manner; another aspect is high-quality packaging and product exhibition. These characteristics encourage customers to make impulsive purchases in the store.

These brands also depend on personalised services provided to customers; they should feel as if they are being looked after by knowledgeable and attentive staff. Customized products and services, such as personalised fittings, custom-made products, or exclusive events, are frequently provided by luxury brands. The customization of products creates an emotional connection and brand loyalty in the consumer, who promotes the brand's products through word of mouth or repeat purchases, among other things.

The luxury brands sustain themselves in the marketplace by owning a collection of accessible

resources and they provide higher value to a particular market. These competitive advantages serve as the primary determinants of their long-term company success and provide the leadership with focus and direction.

The sensory experience is a critical factor in facilitating the sales of luxury brands. Luxury brands use sensory experiences to create emotional connections with their customers. These experiences can be used to create a sense of extravagance and exclusivity. Luxury brands often use ambient lighting, textures, and materials to create a unique atmosphere that appeals to customers' senses. For example, high-end stores may use soft lighting, plush carpets, and rich fabrics to create a luxurious and elegant environment.

Stores play a critical role in communicating the beliefs and marketing strategies of merchants to prospective customers in the "experience economy," where the process of buying a product is as important as the product itself. If executed properly, it offers a guided luxury consuming experience that accurately and consistently represents the viewpoint of luxury retailers and their brand. An experience is a synthesis of a deliberate action, individual memories, and personal perspective. Since luxury businesses guarantee a sensory product experience, the multisensory component acts as an inherent feature of luxury brands and their related strategies. Delivering pleasing experiences to attract and emotionally bind consumers has become a pivotal part of luxury management.

"Marketing that involves the consumers' senses and influences their perception, judgement, and behaviour" is the definition of sensory marketing. Krishna and Schwarz (2014) highlighted the significance of "sensory marketing and embodied cognition," which outlines the idea that we perceive the world through our senses and that our bodily sensations have a significant influence on the choices we make that are independent of our conscious awareness. When viewed critically, sensory marketing provides consumers with a sensory experience that adds value to their consumption (Shahid et al, 1399).

Let us take another example to understand the emotional connect. The brands may use music or soundscapes to create a relaxing or uplifting atmosphere that puts customers at ease. They may also use gastronomical experiences and/or beverages experiences to create a memorable and enjoyable experience for customers.

Touch and sight are the two primary sensory experiences that consumers use. These senses enable attracting customers to retail stores by utilizing lighting, colour, and visual merchandising (signage) to create an immersive and eye-catching environment that reflects their brand image and highlights their products. This can include dramatic lighting, high-quality materials (textures), and eye-catching displays. These displays include mannequins, racks, shelves, and tables, among other things. The display fixtures are made of various materials such as wood, metal, and glass, each with its texture and feel. Visual merchandisers emphasize the tactile experience for customers by incorporating materials such as soft fabrics, textured surfaces, and high-quality finishes.

Other than displays, furniture is also an important part of store design as furniture is one of the first things customers notice when they enter a retail store. Luxury furniture conveys a sense of elegance, exclusivity, and high-end quality, setting the tone for the entire shopping experience. Luxurious furniture, such as plush sofas and chairs, provide a comfortable and relaxing environment for customers to browse, try out products, and engage with the brand. The furniture in a luxury retail store is also aligning with the brand's image and values, conveying the message that the brand is sophisticated, refined, and exclusive. Customers are more likely to remember a shopping experience that is visually

appealing, comfortable, and engaging. Luxury furniture can help create a memorable experience that sets the store apart from its competitors.

The Dior Flagship Store in Paris: The First Christian Dior Boutique

Dior is a name synonymous with beauty, uniqueness, elegance which spans all facets of life beyond reach of a common man! It is an eponymous brand which has a niche market. It has been the haven of the luxury industry. The Dior Flagship Store on Avenue Montaigne in Paris has been a luxury brand retail space designed by renowned architect Peter Marino. The store is designed by the architect with the originality of Christian Dior's vision in mind. Dior wanted to leave a legacy of beauty behind and make the clients feel beautiful and appreciate life in all its splendour. It is also a proof of keeping the original taste of the 18th century and taking references from the historic preferences of Christian Dior's very first boutique. Given that, the first Christian Dior boutique was a masterpiece. He used cotton or linen, the *toile de Jouy* fabric, and made it popular from clothes to upholstery. This printed fabric was originally founded in Ireland 1760, but later in the 18th century it breathed fresh life in the French fashion world.

In the new store, which has come up in place of the old boutique, Peter Marino chose classic wall prints and *cannage* motifs which are original to Dior. Other than these, off-white palettes, as well as luxury fabrics and other textures and materials such as stone, were used. Bystanders can get a good look at the shop through an expansive glass façade, which reveals a spiralling staircase leading to the upper floors. The architect has strategically used *toile de Jouy* fabric on large, detached rectangles to cover doors, walls, and ceilings in an abstract manner, which kept the neoclassical façade true to the original Christian Dior.

From this peek into Dior's representation at the new boutique, amateurs and designers use sight as a sensory experience to attract customers to the store. Other elements, such as touch, smell, and sound, engage the consumer in the retail store. The opulent settings inside the store include furniture pieces by leading industry designers as well as original works from galleries in Paris and Milan. This is a fine display of artistic and creative efforts which is appealing to the eyes. There is an impulsive drive to touch the craftsmanship. This justifies the fact that our visual and touch senses give us an abundant satisfaction in terms of appreciation of the art and propels a connoisseur to put money on the pieces. Tabletops, glasses, vases, silverware, and even table linen, which are mostly made of *toile de Jouy* fabric and *Cannage* motifs which is central to Dior collection, are examples of decorated furniture.

The "Winter Garden," which allows natural lighting to fall in the men salon section, is the unique part of the retail space. Peter Marino believed it was the most important part of the shop and thereby he wanted to give the store another distinguishing feature. Having added flowers to his dresses after World War II, Christian Dior was synonymous with gardens. Peter Marino enjoys gardens and considers them to be metaphors for life. Therefore, he has exclusively created such spaces in the store to add to the ambience and beckon the clients to the section. The other luxury experience is felt in the eateries imbued with the creativity of French chef Jean Imbert. The architect liked the idea of customers spending time inside the store with friends and family, or simply grabbing a bite or writing stories. The main art installation consists of only mirrors, which adds sophistication and style to the restaurant. Another addition is the use of upholstered fabric on the chairs for a comfortable and elegant seating arrangement.

Peter Marino decided to incorporate everything he could into this store, from a 200-meter guest suite to an Onyx-only bathroom. He also emphasized the importance of incorporating a variety of textures and materials made by hand to increase the value of the retail space. The cabinet of Curiosities is another

focal point in the shop, and it is mostly used for gift selection and personalized services.

The brand's scents, which provoke consumers' good feelings, and music enhances the store's aesthetics. These are some of the other elements that are considered carefully as an experience enhancement in the store. The Dior perfumes are exotic and the scents cherished. The scents evoke positive emotions in the customer while also creating a calm atmosphere and a seamless sensory experience for the consumer. Apparel, shoes, bags, jewellery are all the objects used as accessory by both men and women across the globe. The heightened senses of the customers enable the luxury brand to grow to the extent of 79.184 billion euros in 2022.

CONCLUSION

Understanding of five distinctions between luxury stores and basic or improved brand stores is crucial to our study. As a result of their appealing personalities, luxury retailers transmit a sense of authenticity while conveying a sense of exclusivity. They enjoy credibility and convey the charisma of the creative leader, and enable the customers to base their purchasing decisions on aesthetics. All in all the human perception based on strong sensory approach enables the customers to reach out for the products. The tactile and visual sensory appeal helps the luxury market to grow beyond expectancy.

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