

## Point of Purchase (POP) Marketing Model with a Sensory and Experiential Marketing Approach in Chain Stores

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### ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to propose a point of purchase (POP) marketing model with an emphasis on sensory and experiential marketing approaches in chain stores. Based on its objectives, this research is classified as an applied-developmental study. Employing a qualitative approach, the study utilized thematic analysis to develop the proposed model. The statistical population consisted of experts and experienced academic faculty members from universities. The researcher applied the snowball sampling method, achieving theoretical saturation after conducting interviews with 16 elites and experts. Data collection in the qualitative phase was carried out through semi-structured interviews. The design of the model and identification of primary and secondary themes were performed using Maxqda2020 software. The findings revealed seven main themes, including visual appeal and aesthetics of the shopping environment, sensory marketing and its impact on customers' senses, experiential marketing and customer interaction with the brand, facilitation of the purchase process and reduction of customer effort, emotional and cognitive influence on customers, social influence and communication at the point of purchase, and smart technologies in POP marketing.

**KEYWORDS:** Point of purchase marketing, sensory marketing, experiential marketing, chain stores

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## 1. Introduction

Increasing product sales is the primary objective in the retail industry. Achieving higher sales depends not only on the quality of the product being sold but also on its packaging and presentation. In a retail environment, the arrangement of a product can significantly influence whether it is purchased or not. Within a short timeframe, product displays must capture the attention of passing consumers. The use of point-of-purchase (POP) displays is one strategy that brands employ to promote new product types (Hendrasukma & Harnanti, 2023).

With intensifying competition in retail sectors, strategies can be implemented to attract and engage customers within the store, as the primary goal of all retailers in today's competitive landscape is to stimulate consumers to make quick decisions and increase their desire to own a product. If marketers succeed in influencing customers through marketing and situational factors, ultimately encouraging impulsive purchases, they can capture a larger market share. Factors influencing customers' purchasing behavior include categorized personal variables such as disposable income, economic well-being, family influence, credit card usage, and more, as well as store-related factors such as sales promotion strategies, store environment, friendly employee behavior, and others within the retail setting (Ananth et al., 2013).

Regarding the factors affecting customer purchasing behavior, four categories can be identified: (1) individual characteristics (age, gender, income level, education level, etc.), (2) psychological characteristics (self-esteem, impulsiveness, or lack of control over purchasing desires, etc.), (3) situational characteristics (time spent in the store, available budget, store exploration by customers, interior decoration, lighting, music, scent, product display methods, color schemes, etc.), and (4) product-related characteristics (product type, price, packaging design, etc.) (Seifi et al., 2019).

On the other hand, one of the emerging approaches in marketing that many globally renowned brands utilize to sell products, attract, and retain customers is sensory marketing. Compared to other communication and promotion tools (advertising, public relations, personal selling, and one-way marketing), sensory marketing is considered a significant and relatively new tool. Sensory marketing emphasizes the use of the five human senses (sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch) in marketing, whereas traditional marketing is two-dimensional, focusing only on sight and hearing, and even then, not comprehensively. It is evident that emotional connections resulting from the interaction of various senses optimize the alignment between perception and reality, which is a key objective of sensory marketing (Behboodi, 2016). Sensory marketing can evoke strong emotions such as affinity, trust, satisfaction, and loyalty in customers (Kazemi et al., 2020).

Some researchers argue that the importance of human senses has long been overlooked, despite their critical role in shaping brand identity and brand image. It is scientifically well-documented that the five human senses influence behavior, forming one of the most significant theoretical foundations for the importance of sensory marketing (Krishna, 2012). Sensory marketing bridges the gap between traditional marketing theories and responds to the modern consumer's mindset. In essence, sensory marketing refers to a vivid customer experience, requiring two-way

interaction between the organization and the customer. If this experience results in positive and pleasant emotions, the customer not only becomes loyal to the company's products and services but also becomes an advocate for the brand, personally recommending it to others and ultimately performing the most critical marketing activity on behalf of the company (Smilansky, 2009).

However, what has not yet been explored in studies on consumer purchase decisions is this phenomenon at the point of purchase. Research indicates that modeling marketing strategies at the point of purchase (POP) with a sensory and experiential marketing approach in chain stores is being conducted for the first time, highlighting the novelty of this research. Thus, it can be stated that various studies confirm the impact of factors influencing consumers' purchase decisions at the point of purchase. However, the main issue is that, despite efforts to persuade customers and stimulate their purchase motivation, the factors driving consumer purchase decisions in retail environments and the design of a marketing model at the point of purchase (POP) with a sensory and experiential marketing approach in chain stores in our country have not received serious attention. Therefore, the researcher aims to investigate the factors influencing consumer purchase decisions at the point of purchase through this study.

Given that the application of consumer purchase decisions at the point of purchase in chain stores with a sensory and experiential marketing approach is unprecedented, the innovation of this research lies in providing a marketing model at the point of purchase (POP) with a sensory and experiential approach in chain stores, establishing a foundation for developing other models and advancing the knowledge required for this phenomenon. Overall, this research seeks to answer the question: What is the marketing model at the point of purchase (POP) with a sensory and experiential marketing approach in chain stores?

## 2. Theoretical Foundations and Research Background

Experiential marketing is a marketing strategy that engages and captivates customers by creating real-life experiences. This approach emphasizes enabling customers to experience the brand, leaving a pleasant and lasting memory in their minds, one that they can recall even long after the interaction (Dehbini et al., 2021). Experiential marketing, sometimes referred to as *engagement marketing*, is closely aligned with the concepts of customer experience management and customer engagement. It leverages face-to-face or offline interactions to build brand awareness, create and nurture business opportunities, and foster long-term customer loyalty. This form of marketing is a core component of omnichannel marketing (Hosseini Kia et al., 2023).

Experiential marketing is a strategy that invites audiences to engage with a business in physical, in-person settings. By utilizing participatory and tangible branding tools, businesses can showcase not only their products and offerings but also the values and mission they strive for (Khosravi Anjedani et al., 2020). Sensory marketing is defined as a form of marketing that engages consumers' senses and influences their behavior. It provides clear insights into how customers can assess the quality of abstract attributes such as color, taste, smell, and shape. The purpose of this technique is to influence consumers' emotions, perceptions, memories,

preferences, and choices by presenting a product or selling it in a pleasant environment. Traditional marketing approaches, such as conventional advertising, are gradually losing their effectiveness. Sensory marketing and customer experience management are key differentiators in competitive business environments, paving the way for a new economic era where brands and consumers enjoy mutual interactions. The future of sensory marketing is envisioned as one where its essence and philosophy permeate every aspect of brand communication with target customers, ultimately leading to a paradigm shift favoring two-way, simultaneous interactions that engage the target customer at the right time and place. Sensory marketing is the process of identifying and fulfilling customers' needs and interests in a profitable manner, engaging them in two-way communications that bring the brand's personality to life and create added value for target customers. When exploring the most effective marketing approaches, sensory marketing undoubtedly ranks at the top of the list. This strategy represents the future of successful marketing communications (Smilansky, 2009). Touching, tasting, hearing, smelling, and seeing a product play a significant role in shaping our perceptions, and understanding these roles provides a valuable advantage in today's market. These senses are integral to our daily lives, enabling us to fulfill our needs and desires. Behavioral economists have recently begun addressing these needs through sensory marketing, often accompanied by favorable emotional responses to influence purchasing behavior (Yoon & Park, 2012).

Hendrasukma and Harnanti (2023), in a study titled "Analysis of the Application of Design Principles in Point-of-Purchase Displays as an Effort to Attract Consumer Attention in Retail Spaces," stated that increasing product sales is a primary goal in the retail industry. Sales growth depends not only on the quality of the product sold but also on its packaging and presentation. Fagerström et al. (2022), in a study titled "Motivational Events at the Point of Purchase: A Retail Experiment in Online Commerce," found that the treatment group exhibited a higher conversion rate for sales offers. Additionally, the results indicated increased revenue for the treatment group compared to the control group. Bleasdale et al. (2021), in a study titled "Exploring Taste Tests and Point-of-Purchase Persuasion as Strategies to Promote Healthy Food Choices," demonstrated that the effect size reflected changes between individual time points, with an increase from baseline to intervention that was sustained post-intervention. The change from baseline to post-intervention corresponded to a moderate effect size. Hamble et al. (2021), in a study titled "Internalization in Consumer Purchase Decisions: A Point-of-Purchase Study Using the Means-End Chain and Laddering Approach," found that respondents' mental representations at the point of purchase, as a consequence of other elements, led to hedonic and universal values. Hosseini Kia and Mirabi (2023), in a study titled "Identifying and Ranking the Impact of Behavioral Variables and Lifestyle Indicators on Purchase Decisions and Post-Purchase Mental Engagement: A Case Study of Young Women with Financial Resources," concluded that decisions based on behavioral variables result in greater satisfaction, less cognitive dissonance, and reduced mental engagement and psychological tension post-purchase. Khodadad Hosseini et al. (2021), in a study titled "The Impact of Product Aesthetics on Purchase Intention and Purchase Commitment at the Point of Sale with the Mediating Role of Emotional Attachment

and Consumer Goals,” demonstrated that product aesthetics significantly influence purchase intention and commitment. The indirect effect of product aesthetics on purchase intention and commitment through the mediating variable of emotional attachment was also significant. Purchase commitment significantly influenced purchase intention. Khosravi Anjedani et al. (2020), in a study titled “Examining the Impact of Point-of-Purchase Advertising on Consumer Purchase Intention with the Mediating Effect of Brand Equity in Chain Stores,” found that point-of-purchase advertising had a positive and significant impact on consumers’ purchase intention, with brand equity acting as a mediating variable that synergistically enhanced the relationship between point-of-purchase advertising and purchase intention.

### 3. Research Methodology

The present study is exploratory in nature and utilizes qualitative data. The objective of this research is to propose a marketing model at the point of purchase (POP) with a sensory and experiential marketing approach in chain stores. The statistical population for the qualitative research consists of experts and experienced academic faculty members from universities. The researcher employed the snowball sampling method, achieving theoretical saturation after conducting interviews with 16 elites and experts. In this study, the theme analysis technique was used to develop and validate a model for “the marketing model at the point of purchase (POP) with a sensory and experiential marketing approach in chain stores.” To ensure construct validity in this qualitative research, the method of member checking was applied. Additionally, a search for negative cases and alternative explanations was conducted. Efforts were also made to select interviewees with diverse experiences and inclinations to prevent personal biases from skewing the research focus. Furthermore, to achieve internal validity, after coding, categorizing, and analyzing the qualitative data, an experience-based model was developed and compared with the predicted model derived from theoretical themes. To ensure the reliability of the qualitative research and confirm theoretical saturation, a correlation matrix test of agreement among interviewees’ opinions and a dual-coder chart were utilized, which will be further elaborated upon. The analysis of results was conducted using the Maxqda 2020 qualitative analysis software.

### 4. Findings

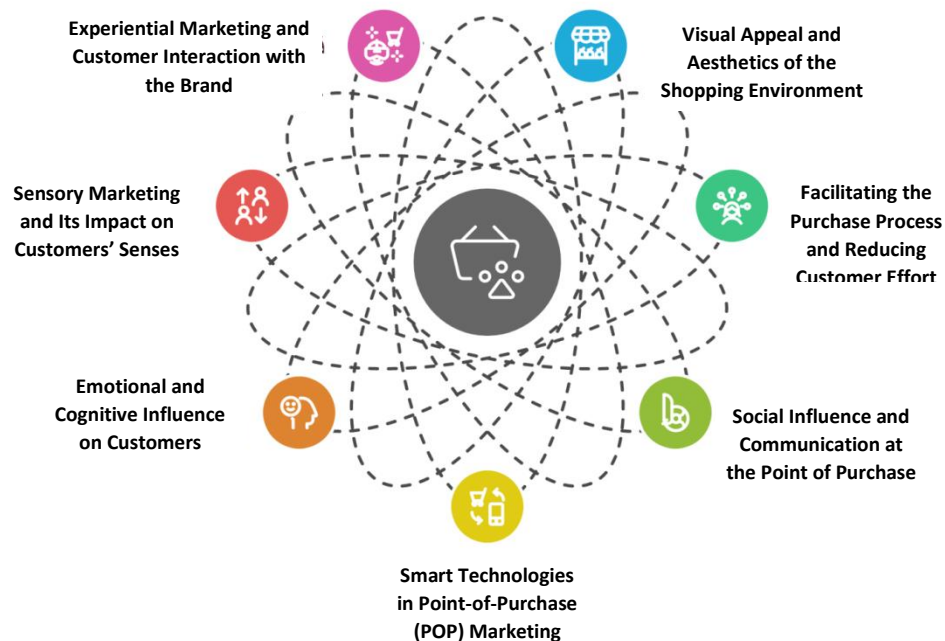
This section addresses the analysis of collected data and the research findings. The data collection tool consisted of semi-structured interview files, with results analyzed using the Maxqda 2020 qualitative analysis software. Data analysis was based on 16 interview files. Subsequently, through three stages of open coding, sub-theme coding, and main theme coding, the main and sub-themes were extracted. These three stages are precisely illustrated in Figure 1. Ultimately, a model titled “the marketing model at the point of purchase (POP) with a sensory and experiential marketing approach in chain stores” is presented for this research. The coding stages are as follows:

1. **Open Coding:** In this stage, interview files were collected and categorized by the researcher. It is worth noting that 16 interview files were collected and coded in this study.
2. **Sub-Themes:** Sub-theme coding occurs when the researcher assigns a code to each paragraph or section of the text after review. At this stage, multiple codes can be assigned to a single section or paragraph of text.
3. **Main Themes:** In this stage, the extracted codes are displayed in the Code System, allowing for categorization and merging of codes. This window represents selective coding (main themes), where codes can be organized, categorized, and arranged to draw a classification diagram.

The main themes (initial organizing themes or dimensions) of the marketing model at the point of purchase (POP) with a sensory and experiential marketing approach in chain stores are as follows:

1. **Main Theme 1:** Visual Appeal and Aesthetics of the Shopping Environment
2. **Main Theme 2:** Sensory Marketing and Its Impact on Customers' Senses
3. **Main Theme 3:** Experiential Marketing and Customer Interaction with the Brand
4. **Main Theme 4:** Facilitating the Purchase Process and Reducing Customer Effort
5. **Main Theme 5:** Emotional and Cognitive Influence on Customers
6. **Main Theme 6:** Social Influence and Communication at the Point of Purchase
7. **Main Theme 7:** Smart Technologies in Point-of-Purchase Marketing

Thus, the thematic network of the marketing model at the point of purchase (POP) with a sensory and experiential marketing approach in chain stores is presented in Figure 1.



**Figure 1: Thematic Network of the Marketing Model at the Point of Purchase (POP) with a Sensory and Experiential Marketing Approach in Chain Stores**

In the following, the frequency of each main and sub-theme extracted is calculated cross-sectionally based on the responses of each interviewee.

**Table 1: Frequency Distribution of Main Theme Codes as Coded Segments Based on Interview Files**

Main Themes	R 01	R 02	R 03	R 04	R 05	R 06	R 07	R 08	R 09	R 10	R 11	R 12	R 13	R 14	R 15	R 16	Frequency
Visual Appeal and Aesthetics of the Shopping Environment	6	5	4	3	5	6	6	7	11	0	11	0	0	6	3	6	79
Experiential Marketing and Customer Interaction with the Brand	5	4	3	3	5	6	3	5	7	3	0	9	0	6	3	6	68
Sensory Marketing and Its Impact on Customers' Senses	7	8	5	5	10	9	6	9	15	0	15	0	0	7	0	7	103
Facilitating the Purchase Process and Reducing Customer Effort	4	5	3	3	6	5	5	3	0	9	0	9	0	6	6	6	70
Emotional and Cognitive Influence on Customers	5	3	3	3	5	5	4	5	0	9	0	7	8	7	0	7	71
Social Influence and Communication at the Point of Purchase	3	5	3	6	4	3	3	3	0	7	0	0	8	4	6	1	56
Smart Technologies in Point-of-Purchase (POP) Marketing	5	4	4	6	6	4	5	5	0	9	0	0	9	7	8	6	78
<b>Total</b>	35	34	25	29	41	38	32	37	33	37	26	25	25	43	26	39	525
<b>Number of Documents</b>	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	16

In this study, seven main themes were identified within the framework of the marketing model at the point of purchase (POP) with a sensory and experiential marketing approach in chain stores, as reported in the figure above. One of the key tools in the Maxqda software is the Code Cloud tool. The output of the Code Cloud tool, based on 16 coded interview files, is presented below. According to the findings, among the extracted codes, the highest frequencies were related to AI-based purchase recommendations, purchase guidance systems, creating a nostalgic feeling, using self-checkout systems, fostering emotional attachment to the brand, instant discount coupons, and interior architecture. At the core of the pyramid are AI-based purchase recommendations, while at the apex are purchase guidance systems, creating a nostalgic feeling, and self-checkout systems. At the base of the pyramid are instant discount coupons, and on the sides of the pyramid are fostering emotional attachment to the brand, interior architecture, and offering product test samples within the marketing model at the point of purchase (POP) with a sensory and experiential marketing approach in chain stores.

## 5. Discussion, Conclusion, and Recommendations

The findings indicate the identification of seven main themes in the marketing model at the point of purchase (POP) with a sensory and experiential marketing approach in chain stores. These themes include: visual appeal and aesthetics of the shopping environment, sensory marketing and its impact on customers' senses, experiential marketing and customer interaction with the brand, facilitating the purchase process and reducing customer effort, emotional and cognitive influence

on customers, social influence and communication at the point of purchase, and smart technologies in point-of-purchase marketing. Among the extracted codes, the highest frequencies were associated with AI-based purchase recommendations, purchase guidance systems, creating a nostalgic feeling, self-checkout systems, fostering emotional attachment to the brand, instant discount coupons, and interior architecture. At the core of the pyramid are AI-based purchase recommendations, at the apex are purchase guidance systems, creating a nostalgic feeling, and self-checkout systems, while at the base are instant discount coupons, and on the sides are fostering emotional attachment to the brand, interior architecture, and offering product test samples within the marketing model at the point of purchase (POP) with a sensory and experiential marketing approach in chain stores.

These findings highlight a comprehensive and multidimensional approach to marketing at the point of purchase (POP), emphasizing sensory and experiential marketing in chain stores. The seven main themes provide a cohesive framework for understanding how to influence customer behavior and decision-making in the shopping environment. These themes clearly demonstrate that marketing at the point of purchase is no longer limited to mere product presentation but relies on creating a complete, multisensory experience for the customer. The integration of these elements can lead to increased customer satisfaction, brand loyalty, and ultimately, higher sales. For successful implementation of this model, chain stores must align their strategies with the needs and preferences of their target customers, as well as local culture and context. These results are somewhat consistent with the findings of studies by Hendrasukma and Harnanti (2023), Fagerström et al. (2022), Bleasdale et al.(2021), Hamble et al.(2021), Hosseini Kia and Mirabi (2023), Khodadad Hosseini et al.(2021), and Khosravi Anjedani et al. (2020).

Based on the seven main themes identified in the marketing model at the point of purchase (POP) with a sensory and experiential approach, the following practical recommendations can help chain stores enhance the customer shopping experience and increase marketing effectiveness:

1. **Visual Appeal and Aesthetics of the Shopping Environment:** To enhance visual appeal, stores can utilize targeted lighting and creative product arrangements, and update decorations seasonally or for special occasions (e.g., Nowruz). This creates an inviting atmosphere that attracts customers, increases their dwell time in the store, and boosts the likelihood of purchases.
2. **Sensory Marketing and Its Impact on Customers' Senses:** Stores can stimulate customers' senses by diffusing subtle scents related to products (e.g., the aroma of fresh bread in the bakery section) and playing music tailored to the target audience. These actions evoke positive emotions and strengthen emotional connections with the brand.
3. **Experiential Marketing and Customer Interaction with the Brand:** Creating interactive stations for product testing (e.g., trying gadgets or food samples) can deliver memorable experiences for customers. These spaces, guided by trained staff, facilitate direct interaction with the brand, fostering a sense of closeness and loyalty.
4. **Facilitating the Purchase Process and Reducing Customer Effort:** Using clear signage, organized product categorization, and increasing the number of checkout counters or self-

checkout systems simplifies the purchase process. These measures reduce waiting times and provide a seamless, satisfying experience for customers.

5. **Emotional and Cognitive Influence on Customers:** Displaying marketing messages that convey the brand's story or values, such as sustainability (e.g., posters with family or environmental imagery), can evoke positive emotions and trust. This approach influences purchase decisions and builds a deeper connection with the brand.
6. **Social Influence and Communication at the Point of Purchase:** Training staff to provide friendly and professional guidance can enhance positive customer interactions. These interactions increase trust and a sense of belonging, encouraging customers to make purchases and return to the store.
7. **Smart Technologies in Point-of-Purchase Marketing:** Installing touch-screen displays for product information or personalized offers can modernize the shopping experience. These technologies provide quick, interactive information, facilitating customer decision-making and reinforcing a sense of innovation and convenience.

These recommendations, with a focus on improving the customer experience and increasing brand engagement, can help chain stores not only boost sales but also strengthen customer loyalty. Implementing a combination of these strategies, tailored to the store's resources and objectives, can significantly enhance the success of marketing at the point of purchase.

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#### **ETHICAL CONSIDERATION**

Authenticity of the texts, honesty and fidelity has been observed.

#### **CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

Author/s confirmed no conflict of interest.