

## DEFINING ASPECTS OF AROMAMARKETING AND ITS EFFECT ON CUSTOMER EMOTIONS IN THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY

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### **Abstract**

*Despite the current global economic challenges, businesses are moving forward with innovative solutions to meet the needs and desires of consumers whose consumption patterns are constantly undergoing significant change. In this era, consumer demands are increasingly differentiated, personalized and diverse, resulting in new and innovative products and services. The value of a product or service is not easily determined or assessed during the customer's purchase process. However, the intrinsic value of a product or service can be influenced before the purchase process and continues to be shaped at each stage. Furthermore, according to the consumer structure, selling a product focuses not only on the value of the product itself, but more importantly on the consumer's emotions and perception of value. Along with the focus on the quality of the product or service during the consumption process, the emotional and psychological satisfaction of consumers must also be emphasized.*

**Key words:** *hospitality, tourism development, tourism marketing, sustainable development*

**JEL:** *M51, P35*

### **Introduction**

In an increasingly competitive market, relying on functional properties and product efficiency is not enough to attract consumers. Businesses need to harness consumers' vision, hearing, touch, smell and taste to unify their messages in order to implement brand personality. This is particularly relevant to the hospitality industry, as the opportunity to host guests will require hoteliers to embrace the multitude of senses, where those who understand and are able to manipulate them to the company's benefit will reap key benefits in developing a competitive advantage for their business.

Flavor marketing has become widely used in various business areas. It has become quite active in the tourism and hotel industry. We can experience French cuisine in Provence, from delicious authentic dishes to the best gourmet meals in amazing restaurants or enjoy the spicy diversity and wonderful Mediterranean seafood in Turkey or Asian delights in Bali. Fascinating websites explore the psychological and mood-enhancing effects of essential oils. Fabulous sites in different countries offer everything you could possibly need, from the best essential oils to botanical skin care, advice, education, cleaning products and professional services. The power of essential oils is used in combination with asanas to experience new areas of perception and allow you to dive deeper into the practice of aromatic yoga.

### **Results and discussion**

The human senses have long been ignored in marketing, despite our awareness of their great importance. The five human senses are of crucial importance to an individual's experience with various buying and consumption processes [2, p.37]. Through the senses, each individual becomes conscious

and perceives companies, products and brands. For this reason, additional knowledge about human senses could make a company's marketing more successful and an individual's sensory experience more personalized. Of the five human senses, the sense of sight has so far dominated marketing practice. There is no doubt that the other human senses - smell, sound, taste and touch - have long been neglected, despite their importance when an individual considers and decides on a product or brand.

The growing interest in sensory marketing among practitioners, consultants and researchers means that all five human senses are now receiving increased attention. Often, the interest is in making customers aware of a product or brand to achieve short-term tactical sales goals. Instead, sensory marketing, in our view, should be looked at strategically as a way to clarify a company's identity and values, with the long-term goal of creating brand awareness and establishing a sustainable brand image. The current development of sensory marketing illustrates the emergence of a new era in marketing, one in which the five senses will be at the heart of a firm's marketing strategy and tactics. For this reason, it is becoming increasingly important for companies - whether they are selling traditional consumer goods or a service - to affect and influence customers in new, challenging and imaginative ways to tap into the human senses.

The service landscape is also becoming an environment for building brand image rather than selling goods and services. More and more shops, supermarkets, hotels, destinations, restaurants, malls and shopping centers are building emotional connections in addition to rational ones in order to appeal to human senses through sensory experiences.

Our research shows that a different vision, a sensory marketing framework, is also needed to solve future marketing challenges. For this reason, we suggest that sensory marketing is not equivalent to either mass marketing or relationship marketing, as it has its starting point in the individual's brain. The transition from the managerial practice of mass marketing and relationship marketing to the managerial practice of sensory marketing is illustrated in Table 1.

**Table 1.** The transition from mass and relationship marketing to sensory marketing

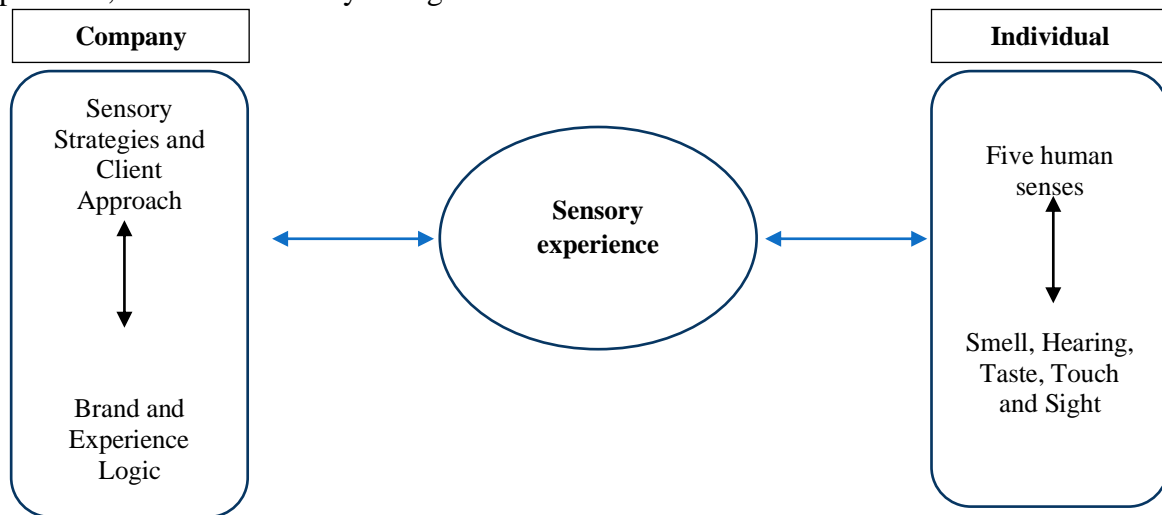
	Mass marketing	Relationship marketing	Sensory marketing
Marketing	The logic of goods Change of perspective Transactional marketing	Service logic The relationship perspective Relationship marketing	The logic of experience Brand perspective Sensory marketing
Strategic marketing	Product focus Customer acquisition Transactional strategies	Customer orientation Customer retention Relational strategies	Concentration of sense Customer treatment Sensory strategies
Tactical marketing	Persuasion and promotion One-way communication Production technology	Interaction and interconnection Two-way communication Information technology	Online dialogue and interaction Multidimensional communication Digital technology

*Source: Developed by the author based on [4, p.197]*

Sensory marketing differs from mass marketing and relationship marketing in that it originates in the five human senses. In the human brain, in both the left and right hemispheres, the mental flows, processes and psychological reactions that result in an individual's sensory experience take place. A

sensory marketing framework is based on the assumption that a firm should reach the five human senses at a deeper level than mass and relationship marketing. For this reason, sensory marketing is concerned with how a firm looks at the customer, i.e., how it encounters the individual in a personal and reciprocal way through dialogue, interaction, multidimensional communication and digital technology. This is different from customer acquisition in mass marketing or customer retention in relationship marketing. Treating customers should be based as much on logic and rationality as on emotions and values to create brand awareness and establish a lasting brand image. This image is the result of the sensory experiences an individual has about a brand. Thus, human senses, which neither mass marketing nor relationship marketing take into account, are at the heart of what we call 'sensory marketing'. Further on, we will discuss some of the theoretical starting points.

Sensory marketing recognises how a firm, through various sensory strategies and sensory expressions, can create brand awareness and establish a brand image that relates to the customer's identity, lifestyle and personality. Therefore, a company's sensory marketing approach should be deliberately and strategically based on the five human senses. However, sensory marketing also recognises how a company should treat its customers in a more intimate and personal way than previously achieved through mass marketing and relationship marketing. Yet the road to success is largely through emotion, as many customers move away from appreciating only the product's functional attributes and features and instead want to see the product as an experience. In this regard, different sensory expressions for each human sense are important to facilitate the sensory experience of the individual. Sensory marketing places the human brain, with its five senses, at the centre of marketing. A brand is registered in an individual's brain and an image is created in terms of mental concepts and imagination. This image is the result of the experiences an individual has with a company or brand. Each individual has a subjective experience that we call "the logic of experience" [6, p.19]. This logic is individual and personal. It is the result of how the individual's five human senses perceive and explain an experience, either individually or together.



**Figure 1.** Sensory marketing

*Source: Developed by the author based on [8, p.317]*

The most important concepts underlying how firms and individuals co-create and perceive sensory experiences are illustrated in Figure 1.

Sensory strategies for smell, sound, sight, taste and touch are now presented in more detail to give an idea of what sensory marketing means in practice. In this paragraph, further analysis and discussion of how a firm can develop appropriate sensory strategies for each of the five human senses is presented.

**The sense of smell** is closely related to emotional life, as smells can strongly affect emotions [10, p.12]. A human being can remember more than 10,000 different smells, and the perception of a previously experienced smell is sufficient to associate it with previous memories. Smells can contribute to sensory experiences that create lasting images in the customer's memory that create awareness as well as create an image of a brand both temporarily and long-term. This can happen through short-term marketing activities, where the role of scent is to create awareness around a product or brand, or through long-term strategies, where scent becomes a major element of a company's identity. Certain expressions about the composition of a scent are decisive for fragrance experiences. These include the natural association of an odor with a product - its congruence with the product - and the intensity of an odor. These expressions are important when odors that appear to be related to products tend to contribute more consciously positively to the sensory experience. Gender differences in odor perception explain why gender as an expression is also of great importance in considering an appropriate sensory strategy for the olfactory sense. In contrast, subtle smells can affect a more oblivious individual.

In a service situation, for example, smells can increase the mood of customers and contribute to a good ambience. Smells can also have a positive impact on customer loyalty to a business. Vanilla and clementine aromas, in particular, affect customer behavior, making customers linger longer in service contexts such as shops or supermarkets than they would otherwise. Flavors also improve recall and brand recognition. Some companies try to associate specific flavors with their brands through what are called flagship flavors. This link can also be made through a legal fragrance trademark, whereby a company uses a single fragrance as its trademark. One advantage may be that the company no longer has to use visual logos in its marketing strategy and tactics.

**Sound** has always been of great importance in society [12, p.72]. Most people give meaning to sound, and music, as a source of inspiration, often is used as a way to shape a person's identity. More and more companies are realizing that sound can be a strategy to strengthen a brand's identity and image. Sound expressions, such as jingles, voice and music, offer opportunities to create a sonic experience. Such expressions can also be used to create publicity around a product or brand or to reinforce a chosen theme. Sound - often through music - is considered when service landscapes, such as shops and supermarkets, try to create a pleasant environment. When sound is used consciously, a company has great opportunities to create a signature sound that characterizes its brand.

A sound strategy takes into account that customers react with feelings to music and voices. In creating a sound experience it is important to take a holistic view of a company, where all sounds are considered, from the switchboard to the voices of employees. Using an artist or music producer can be attractive as a means of expressing a brand identity in a new and fascinating way. This involves trying to become more personal or individualized. Digital technology gives a company the ability to balance and control sound to create an acceptable acoustic in a service environment. Creating a sonic experience may require eliminating distracting sounds. This elimination can be accomplished with "sound walls" that control sound between different spaces.

**Visualization** as a strategy for the sense of sight is about creating brand awareness and establishing an image of a product or brand which in turn enhances the sensory experiences of the customer [14, p.43]. The image that a firm wishes to convey about itself then contributes to its identity

and underpins the image that customers have of it. The identity of a firm or brand as a distinctive feature is often expressed through various aesthetic elements in marketing, such as advertising, visual and verbal identity, design and style, but also through electronic media, websites or employees. Sight is generally considered to be the most powerful of the human senses and also the most seductive. The visual sense and visual system allow us to detect changes and differences when we see a new design, different packaging or a new inferior store. Each image formed is compared to previous experiences and memories; each new image has a relationship to previous sensory experiences.

For this reason, a visioning strategy is based on a series of visual expressions, each of which, alone or together, can clarify the goods and services as well as the service landscape. Expressions such as design, packaging and style are often more closely associated with goods than services. Conversely, expressions such as color, light and theme can appear in both goods and services encounters, which is also true for expressions such as graphics, exterior and interior.

**The sense of taste** is one of the most distinct human emotional senses. This is often expressed in everyday life through concepts such as sweet, sour and a matter of taste [16, p.939]. We use the taste buds on the tongue to sense taste, although there are also taste buds in the mouth and throat. To reinforce a company or brand identity, taste experiences of different kinds can help create a product or brand image. It doesn't matter if a company or brand naturally appeals to the sense of taste with its products. Therefore, tastes can act as a spice for a brand to give it extra dimensions. When businesses offer food and drink, this is a common way of interacting with customers and facilitating their sensory experiences. It can also occur in situations where rival firms compete with products that are similar in price and quality.

In these cases, tastes can differentiate a firm's brand if, for example, food, drinks or sweets are added to attract customers and draw their attention. Sensory expressions such as name, presentation and knowledge are important and contribute to customers' taste experiences. Knowing how, for example, different tastes and taste compositions react together can make one's sensory experience deeper and more meaningful. It is also important to consider how food and drink are presented to customers. Descriptive names have been shown to increase sales of certain dishes by almost 30 % in restaurants.

**The tactile sense** is the sense by which we have physical contact with the surrounding world and can investigate three-dimensional objects [18, p.32]. The tactile sense also helps build a sense of shape that tells us whether an object is sharp, rough or round. For this purpose, it is not necessary to touch the object itself. We can remember and re-experience how something feels by simply looking at it or thinking about it. Most companies have not yet realized the importance of human senses for sustainable marketing, but brands that contribute to unique tactile experiences have good opportunities to create an identity and image around a product in terms of tactile marketing. Brands can be highlighted through tactile expressions such as material and surface in product and service landscapes, as well as temperature and weight. For physical interaction with customers to be possible, a company's products need to be available in physical form. Customers must be able to touch, squeeze, turn and reverse different products. Encouraging touch can make customers willing to interact with products they would not normally notice. This increases the chances of impulsive or unplanned purchases. The tactile experience is also important in purchasing and consuming services. This is often recognised, for example, by the soft seats for comfort at a tour company and the hard chairs and tables at a fast food restaurant. Finally, it is important to note that digital technology offers increased possibilities to create realistic tactile experiences during product development. Digital technology can produce a tactile experience by simulating pressure and vibration, for example for airplanes, cars or video games.

Technology that stretches the skin when a digital object is touched is also available, making it possible to replicate the sensation of touching an object being viewed on a screen.

Each of the five human senses - smell, sound, sight, taste and touch - contributes to an experience. A sensory experience is the result of the senses reacting to different elements or triggers in marketing. These elements or triggers are often called 'stimuli' in a traditional psychological context.

From current and existing theoretical research, olfactory marketing provides evidence of subconscious stimulation resulting in memory, love, comfort, happiness and various emotional statistics. It is different from traditional visual and auditory marketing methods and is labeled "scent marketing" [17, p.66]. Human olfactory sense is applied to a new and effective way of marketing. It has been studied that visual, gustatory, auditory and tactile aesthetic stimulation has begun to culminate in "fatigue" caused by prolonged exposure to advertisements in the various forms of ubiquitous media we use today. Therefore, the olfactory sense can be perceived as a new and underused weapon in sensory marketing to invoke new experiences and stand out from the crowd.

Today, marketers at home and abroad praise the effectiveness of scent marketing, which has become the latest innovation in which many large companies have invested heavily to build a brand based on the sense of smell. Experiencing and finding the right scent can reflect the quality of the business as well as attract the right customers and increase the number of consumers, as research has shown that certain scents evoke positive moods and desired behavioral responses to enhance perceived service standards, which is undoubtedly a new and innovative approach to marketing.

Different hotels, based on their market positioning or customer demand, will select different scents that are aligned with their branding objectives. Business hotels are likely to focus on choosing a universally acceptable fragrance that creates an impression of simplicity, professionalism and sophistication that is consistent with the architectural and interior design as well as the clientele of the establishment. Trendy, contemporary or lifestyle hotels would possibly opt for a fresh, floral and exciting fragrance that appeals to a younger audience, which is in tune with the level of energy, freedom, innovation and curiosity that this demographic exudes. Some resorts will choose a more natural, sweeter scent from a variety of seasonal fruits to harmonize and give guests a sense of family and warmth to complement the natural surroundings. A conference hotel hosting large meetings or exhibitions and catering to large crowds and often limited space may opt for a spicy fragrance and refreshing deodorant.

Different departments may also have their own unique fragrance that will create the perfect environment for their specialities, providing customer satisfaction. A spa will have a wide range of relaxing scents that will harmonize with the various physical relaxation techniques they have prepared for guests, while casinos try to maintain a neutral or refreshing "background" scent that will not negatively affect guests and their efforts to overcome the house. The combination and synergy of these aromas in unity with the other four senses will ultimately create a healthier experience for guests, who will associate the experience with the brand.

From a different perspective, the lobby is arguably the first stop for guests after entering the hotel, where olfactory marketing can generate a strong sense of place. Hotel operators need to understand the significance of this location and apply the right strategy. In addition, hoteliers need to use a number of different sensory marketing techniques that have been previously discussed, such as visual, auditory and other ways to engage guests to form a branding experience.

Sheraton Hangzhou Long Xi has recently embraced a new fragrance that describes the sweet smell of an apple pie that guests will smell in public areas before entering the hotel [13, p.3]. As soon as

guests enter the hotel, they will smell a more distinctive scent. Pure, fresh and natural, similar to a summer afternoon that has just recovered from a heavy rain, releasing the smell of freshly cut grass. It is expected that this evolving and changing scent will charm hotel guests and enhance the guest experience from one area of the hotel to the next, building expectations that will shape to merge with the hotel's identity. In the hallways and rooms, a light and natural scent that blends with the colors and tactile feel of the interior will exude a sense of peace and harmony that will create the right ambience for a weary guest.

In addition, there are various international consulting companies that can also, depending on the client's brand image, design, recommend or research and develop a unique fragrance that conforms to the client's existing brand personality. For example, William Toffee Hotel is a new European and American rustic-style accommodation provider in Hangzhou, which has been named "the sweetest rustic hotel in Hangzhou". The hotel's design is unique, creating an impression of delicate sweetness that is filled with candy and other sweets to impress a certain standard in the minds of consumers in this niche market. The aroma of this environment causes consumers to produce a pleasant emotional response and leads the right customers to purchase the products and services offered.

Based on the scent consultants, the hotel uses different types of fragrances to match the overall business promotion activities, which creates a more unique experience for the consumers. By using a lavender-based fragrance, the hotel creates a cheerful Christmas feel, while on Valentine's Day a nutmeg scent is used to create a charming and cheerful environment. Hoteliers need to be mindful to use scent marketing sparingly, as overdoing it will make the scent too strong for the customer and cause the opposite effect.

Currently, there are new, automated atmospheric systems that are relatively common in new hotels. These investments sell convenience, efficiency and standardization in their consistency of running from 7am to 11pm, operating 16 hours a day. The system can be used depending on the environment to increase the length of fragrance time, concentration and frequency of their unique program, which can be set in advance to a specific time period to control the scent and positively influence the guest experience.

The hospitality industry, like other sectors, is increasingly facing the problem of visual and information overload [11, p.87]. This has made consumers increasingly resistant to conventional marketing. As a result, it becomes increasingly complicated to attract customers to the point of using the services they are interested in. This is the main reason why there is an increased interest in targeting multiple senses at the same time to influence buying behavior. One of the options for marketers is to focus on smell, as it has great potential in this area.

The current era is characterized by intensifying and increasing competition between businesses that host and serve tourists. Retaining customers is becoming increasingly difficult, not excluding the service sector. The intangible nature of the services provided makes it significantly more difficult for customers to assess the offer before actual consumption. Flavor marketing, using fragrances and various innovative technologies, offers an effective tool to increase the tangibility of services. Examining customer behavior is becoming increasingly important. It focuses primarily on the attractiveness of the premises where customers go and the appeal of the services offered to potential customers.

Hence, much research focuses directly on the use of aromamarketing in services such as cafés, restaurants, hotels, travel agencies, public transport, medical establishments, etc., as well as on the effects of flavoring on customer behavior.

The hospitality industry and the HORECA sector face enormous competition in the tourism market, which is why they are constantly looking for ways to become unique and differentiate themselves from their competitors. One of these is sensory marketing, which can tap directly into the hearts, minds and wallets of customers using all five human senses. A pleasant ambience is what underpins any successful hotel, hostel, restaurant, café or bakery. In a hotel environment, aromamarketing can create an impressive welcome effect and eliminate unpleasant odors. Smells or aromas have long been neglected in the hospitality industry, but today's hoteliers are aware that smells can enhance the guest experience and, of course, increase the perceived level of service.

Choosing the right fragrance for a hotel depends on the hotel's purpose. For example, business hotels opt for universally acceptable fragrances that create the impression of sophistication, while modern hotels opt for a fresh or floral scent. The most common hotel fragrances cover lobbies, corridors, elevators, restaurants and other public areas. This is why most hotel research has been carried out in public spaces, but there is not enough evidence on the effects of introducing fragrances in private areas of hotels, such as guest rooms.

One study was carried out in a five-star hotel in Spain to analyze the effect of fragrance used in the hotel room on guests' emotions. The researchers chose lavender as the room fragrance for the experiment, as it is considered one of the most pleasant smells for people. One of the significant benefits of this study lies in the methodological apparatus used, as people's emotional state was measured using the FaceReader app and not just based on directly questioning people via questionnaires. This study suggested that the introduction of perfume in a hotel room can create positive emotions among guests. People who experienced a scented room showed higher intensity of happiness and emotional state than people who experienced a room without fragrance [9, p.20].

We also took as an example another study by an author who found that smell can evoke an immediate emotional reaction in hotel guests. He conducted his experiment on a sample of 200 guests in a hotel in Italy, although he collected feedback using a single classical questionnaire. The Sonar Hotel in Italy operates an entire network of luxury hotels branding its scent by creating a sense of luxury. The refreshing aroma of white tea greets guests from the first second they enter the hotel. The results of the experiment confirmed that the aroma in the hotel made guests feel more relaxed and in a better mood, and more than 85% of guests said they would return to the hotel.

Another study was carried out in a US hotel, which similarly only perfumes public areas at the entrance and reception with a specially created fragrance, a combination of ginger flower, lily, lemongrass and vanilla. The aim of the research was to uniformly analyze the emotional states of guests created by the hotel's fragrance. The results showed that happiness, pleasure and well-being can be included among the most dominant emotions that the scent created among guests. This analysis confirmed that these positive emotions are also associated with motivation and desire to visit the hotel again, desire to stay in hotel rooms, and feelings of loyalty to the hotel and the brand it represents.

Travel agencies that are part of the tourism industry are also among the service sectors where flavor marketing plays an important role. Lately, travel agencies have only been using holiday catalogs, photos, pictures to attract customers and increase company sales. Nowadays, this service sector is increasingly using the potential of flavors, where aromas are used to try to induce a holiday feeling in their customers the moment they enter the office. Studies have shown that specially created exotic flavors directly remind potential travel agency clients of the ambience of a seaside holiday, so that the time clients spend in the office influences their willingness to book additional holidays and spend more money than they originally planned. In these types of operations, the smell of coconut, for example, is



reminiscent of the ambience of an exotic holiday at sea, the smell of orange is reminiscent of a holiday in the Mediterranean, and the smell of sea breeze is evocative of ships at sea. This is why these aromas are most often used in travel agency rooms.

For instance, a study was conducted in the travel agency Happy Tour, whose rooms were flavored with two selected fragrances - Red Sea and pear. The results confirmed the positive impact of the effectiveness of the implementation of the flavors on the customers and on the economic indicators of the agency, as during the flavoring period they clearly recorded more sales than before and after the flavoring.

Even though the relative importance of smell within the human senses is 3.5%, it is of great importance in marketing. The marketing industry, as well as other sectors, is increasingly facing the problem of visual and information overload. This has made people increasingly powerful in traditional marketing and activities that everyone is already used to. In this way, it becomes harder and harder to surprise a potential customer with something, but it is even more difficult to attract their attention in such a way that they will specifically come to the hotel in question and make unlimited use of the services offered by the hotel. A very good option is for marketers, management people to focus on the use of smell in rooms.

While all other sensory systems are a long way of transmitting information to the brain, including the transmission of information, the sense of smell is directly connected to our brain, which is responsible for the transmission of emotions and everything related to memory. Smell is the most sensitive sense of the human body. There are a limited number of studies in the service provider field that have used neuroscience tools to examine the effect of aroma on human emotions [7, p.105]. Methodological procedures have varied greatly between each study, making comparison and extrapolation difficult. Due to the fact that olfactory compounds and odors have a subconscious effect, it is necessary to extend the analysis of the methodological apparatus to implicit research using the tools of consumer neuroscience.

Thus, it has been found that measurement of the human subconscious can be performed using a device that monitors the electrical activity of the brain, e.g. an electroencephalograph, something similar to that used in medicine, but in a mobile version.

At the same time, new technologies are emerging to obtain unconscious feedback, working with anonymised data, which can monitor the emotional index of a given space via special cameras. The device captures people's emotions as they enter and exit a hotel or other business, and can record changes in customer emotions.

At the same time, it can identify whether this change has occurred in a positive, neutral or negative way. Given the findings, there is a clear need for research in the field of aromatherapy in tourism services, not only by using consumer neuroscience tools, but also by implementing them in real-world conditions, as environmental factors such as air quality can most directly influence the overall perception of customers.

### **Conclusions:**

Hotel marketing goes beyond the implementation of the classic variants: price, product, place and promotion. Other ways are needed to provide guests with a differentiated value experience that connects them with your concept and increases sales. In the new era of sensory marketing is Aroma Marketing: the use of different aromas that stimulate the senses and can generate different moods.

This marketing trend is reinforced by its great ability to produce changes in human behavior. In recent years the number of establishments working with flavor has increased, so that it does not derive

from its products. Luxury hotels such as Sheraton, Sofitel, Westin, Intercontinental or Mandarin Oriental have used this marketing trend to stay one step ahead of the competition.

In today's increasingly competitive market, where there is a constant acceleration of product updates and changes, consumers have developed filters to block out unnecessary information. Therefore, in order to find new sensory impacts that stimulate consumption, marketers need to evolve and use different strategies to stimulate customer attention to corporate brands. Recently, fragrance marketing has become a common marketing strategy both at home and abroad.

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