

Cross-cultural differences in shopper attitudes to olfactory marketing: Poland vs. India

ABSTRACT

This PhD thesis significantly emphasizes the conscious and semi-conscious consumer experiences within retail environments. It investigates the intricate influence of olfactory marketing on consumer decision-making across various cultural contexts. By integrating the findings from five interrelated studies, which comprise qualitative metaphor elicitation, systematic literature review, and cross-cultural survey, this research offers a complex analysis of how ambient fragrance, store atmospherics, and social contexts collectively shape consumers' thoughts, emotions, and behaviours.

The research commences with systematically evaluating the literature on fragrance marketing, utilizing the PRISMA framework. This culminates in the establishment of an integrative conceptual framework. Considering control variables, this model elucidates how fragrance influences behavioural intentions, actual consumer behaviours, and cognitive responses.

The second phase employs the Zaltman Metaphor Elicitation Technique (ZMET) to ascertain the subconscious metaphors and sensory cues, specifically olfactory, auditory, and spatial, that underpin customer satisfaction and brand loyalty. These qualitative insights inform the design of retail environments that evoke emotional resonance and facilitate decision-making.

The subsequent quantitative stages examine the relationship between companionship and ambient fragrance at the point of sale in Polish and Indian cultures. The findings indicate that while Polish consumers display heightened cognitive and behavioural responses alone, fragrance-driven outcomes in India, such as increased time spent, higher expenditure, and greater impulse purchases, are significantly enhanced in a companion's presence. Importantly, confirmatory component and cluster analysis reveal that ambient scent enhances brand loyalty across behavioural, cognitive, and attitudinal dimensions.

This thesis offers a theoretical contribution by applying Schwartz's Theory of Cultural Values, the Theory of Planned Behaviour, and the Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) model to cross-cultural olfactory marketing. Practically, it equips retailers with valuable insights for designing sensory-rich, culturally attuned environments that foster consumer loyalty, emotional connections, and improved experiences.