

# Sensory Marketing Strategies and Their Influence on Purchasing Decisions in Offline Retail

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## Abstract

This study examines the role of sensory marketing strategies in enhancing shopping experiences and consumer loyalty in offline retail in the semi-urban area of Bone Regency. Using a qualitative approach with in-depth interviews and participatory observation, this study found that sensory elements such as lighting, music, aroma, and opportunities for direct interaction with products significantly influence consumer comfort, positive emotions, and visit duration in stores. The optimal implementation of sensory strategies increases the likelihood of impulse purchases and builds positive perceptions, satisfaction, and customer loyalty. These findings confirm that physical stores retain a unique advantage as a multisensory experience arena that digital channels cannot fully replace. However, the study also identified challenges such as resource constraints, varying consumer preferences, the need for more personalized service, and innovation in promotions and store facilities. The practical implications of this research encourage retailers to be more structured in designing store ambience, enhancing staff training, and integrating experience-based loyalty programs. Further research is recommended to expand the context, quantitatively measure the specific contributions of each sensory element, and explore the integration of sensory strategies with digital innovations within an omnichannel ecosystem.

**Keywords:** Sensory Marketing, Shopping Experience, Consumer Loyalty, Offline Retail, Multisensory Strategy

## 1. Introduction

The modern retail industry in Indonesia is currently facing increasingly complex competitive challenges ([Anggraeni & Silalahi, 2021](#); [Krisnadewi & Soewarno, 2020](#); [Rivani et al., 2023](#)), especially since the emergence of e-commerce and changes in consumer behavior that increasingly prioritize a shopping experience that is different from simply purchasing products ([Bilgihan et al., 2016](#); [Lu et al., 2018](#)). Amid the digitalization wave, physical stores in semi-urban areas still play a strategic role as spaces for social interaction and sensory experiences that online platforms cannot fully replace ([Krishna, 2012](#); [Spence et al., 2014](#)).

Many consumers still prefer to shop directly at stores for products closely associated with touch, scent, visuals, and even specific atmospheres that foster comfort and trust ([Sarstedt et al., 2023](#); [Soars, 2009](#)). Sensory marketing strategies have emerged as a key approach to building differentiation and emotional connections with consumers in physical stores ([Arora, 2025](#); [Shahid et al., 2022](#)).

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The application of sensory elements such as lighting, music, scent, color, and spatial arrangement is recognized to influence perception, mood, and ultimately drive spontaneous and planned purchasing decisions ([Arora, 2025](#); [Peck & Childers, 2008](#); [Spence, 2020](#)). However, empirical research and sensory marketing practices in Indonesia, particularly in local or semi-urban retail contexts, remain limited. Most retailers in these areas tend to implement sensory strategies intuitively, without a contextual research basis, while existing literature remains focused on large retailers in major cities or developed countries ([Nghiem-Phú, 2017](#); [Perks & Shumba, 2023](#); [Reinartz et al., 2011](#)).

The main research question in this study stems from this fact: what are the forms and applications of sensory marketing strategies in offline retail stores in semi-urban areas, and how do they influence consumers' purchasing decision-making processes? This phenomenon has become increasingly relevant as changes in consumer behavior demand more personalized, multisensory, and memorable experiences, rather than mere access to products ([Krishna, 2012](#); [Spence, 2020](#); [Spence et al., 2014](#)).

## 2. Literature Review

The problem-solving approach in this study draws on two main theoretical frameworks: the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) model and the Multisensory Marketing Framework. The S-O-R model emphasizes that in-store environmental stimuli—such as visual, auditory, and olfactory cues—influence consumers' psychological states (organism), ultimately determining their responses through purchase decisions ([Krishna, 2012](#); [Mehrabian & Russell, 1974](#)).

The Multisensory Marketing Framework reinforces this perspective by highlighting the importance of engaging multiple senses to enhance emotional engagement and perceived value of a brand or product ([Spence, 2020](#); [Spence et al., 2014](#)). These frameworks jointly explain how environmental cues translate into cognitive and affective responses that drive purchasing intentions.

The strengths and novelty of this study lie in integrating the S-O-R approach and Multisensory Marketing to map the relationship between sensory strategies implemented by local retailers and consumers' psychological responses and behavior, particularly in the under-explored semi-urban market. Thus, this study is expected to fill the literature gap and provide evidence-based practical recommendations to strengthen the competitiveness of physical retail amid the rapid transformation of omnichannel in Indonesia.

## 3. Research Method

This study employs a qualitative approach with an exploratory case study design ([Yin, 2018](#)) to delve deeply into the application of sensory marketing strategies in offline retail in the semi-urban area of Bone Regency and its impact on consumer purchasing decision-making processes. The research location was selected purposively at several local retail stores—independent and chain stores—that have implemented sensory elements such as lighting, aroma, music, spatial arrangement, and product display consciously or intuitively. The main informants consisted of store owners or managers and active consumers who regularly shop at these stores, with a criterion of variation in age, gender, and economic background to ensure that the perspectives obtained were more representative and rich in data.

Data collection was conducted through semi-structured in-depth interviews, which allowed researchers to explore perceptions, experiences, and motivations from both the business and consumer perspectives. The interviews focused on consumers' experiences of the store atmosphere, perceptions of comfort, the appeal of sensory elements (visual, auditory, olfactory,

tactile), and their influence on the desire to linger in the store and purchase decisions—spontaneous and planned. Each interview was recorded (with the informant's consent) and transcribed verbatim to ensure data accuracy.

In addition to interviews, participatory observation was conducted in the store environment, directly recording the store atmosphere, sensory elements, consumer responses during shopping, and interactions between employees and customers. Visual documentation, such as interior photos, product displays, and field observation notes, was also collected to strengthen the narrative of the findings and support data triangulation.

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis techniques according to the [Braun & Clarke \(2006\)](#) model, beginning with open coding of interview transcripts and observation notes, grouping codes into main themes, and finally constructing a coherent narrative of findings aligned with the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) theory and Multisensory Marketing. Data validity was ensured through triangulation of techniques (interviews, observations, documentation), sources (store owners/managers and consumers), and member checking by confirming the interpretation of analysis results with several key informants.

Throughout the study, all ethical procedures were strictly adhered to. Participants were provided with informed consent, confidentiality of identity was guaranteed, and all participation was voluntary without any pressure. With a systematic methodological design and robust data validation, this study is expected to generate a contextual and in-depth understanding of the role of sensory marketing strategies in shaping consumer behavior in local retail settings in semi-urban areas.

## 4. Findings and Discussions

### 4.1 Findings

#### 4.1.1 Physical Factors & Store Atmosphere

Physical factors and store atmosphere are key dimensions that significantly shape consumers' perceptions, comfort, and purchasing decisions while shopping at offline retailers. In this context, the consumer experience in stores is inseparable from various sensory stimuli intentionally or unintentionally presented by store managers. Several sensory aspects, such as lighting, background music or sound, and store aroma, are central sub-themes that are most frequently mentioned and considered to influence the quality of the shopping experience. The findings for each sub-theme are described in more detail below to better understand how each element contributes to consumer comfort and loyalty.

##### 4.1.1.1 lighting

Store lighting emerged as a dominant factor influencing consumer experience and comfort while shopping. Almost all respondents reported that bright lighting made the store more attractive, easier for visitors to browse, and more visually comfortable. Many participants highlighted that poor lighting made it difficult to locate the desired products and reduced their willingness to browse longer. This is reflected in the following responses:

*“Yes, because the store lighting is not bright enough, it makes it difficult for me to choose items.” (IM)*

*“It really affects me, I prefer bright stores.” (SN)*

*“Good lighting makes products more attractive and easier to see.” (FI)*

*“Of course, it greatly affects me because I can clearly see the products.” (IHS)*

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*"Lighting is important so that we don't choose the wrong color or type of item." (NA)*

*"Yes, it makes it easier for us to choose items." (JA)*

These findings indicate that optimal lighting is an aesthetic aspect and an essential part of retail strategy to increase consumer satisfaction and purchasing decisions. Stores with good lighting tend to provide a more positive shopping experience, increase visit duration, and increase the chances of transactions because visitors feel more comfortable, at home, and confident with their chosen products.

#### 4.1.1.2 music & sound

In addition to lighting, music or background sound is also a sensory element that significantly influences a store's atmosphere and visitors' comfort. The right music can create a comfortable, entertaining, and relaxing atmosphere that makes visitors want to stay longer in the store. Some respondents even said that the music did not make the atmosphere boring. The following are variations of quotes from informants:

*"It's comfortable and entertaining, so I like to stay longer in the store." (SN)*

*"The music in the store makes the atmosphere more lively and not boring." (FI)*

*"It's good and makes me feel comfortable, especially when the songs aren't too loud." (MA)*

*"It's entertaining and makes visitors enjoy the atmosphere of the store." (IHS)*

*"The music makes me feel at home and relaxed." (RK)*

*"I don't get bored quickly while waiting." (JF)*

This sub-theme shows that choosing the right music can be a crucial sensory strategy for stores to improve mood, create a pleasant shopping experience, and extend consumer visit duration. Comfortable music has the potential to enhance positive perceptions of the store and encourage consumers to explore products more, thereby providing opportunities for stores to increase sales figures.

#### 4.1.1.3 aroma & sensory elements

In addition to lighting and music, the aroma of a store is also an aspect that respondents consider when assessing the comfort and appeal of a store's atmosphere. A combination of pleasant aromas, music, and good lighting will make visitors feel more relaxed, focused, and even want to return to shop at that location. Some respondents stated:

*"The aroma in the store is also important; if it smells good, I feel more comfortable." (RK)*

*"It makes me feel comfortable and focused. Sometimes it's the scent of soap or perfume in the store that makes the difference." (NS)*

*"Yes, it makes me feel comfortable and relaxed." (AM)*

*"If the music and scent are pleasant, I feel more relaxed and not in a hurry." (RI)*

*"All these elements greatly influence my choice of a regular store." (JA)*

*"Yes, it makes me feel more relaxed and comfortable." (RI)*

These findings emphasize the importance of a sensory approach in modern store management. A pleasant sensory atmosphere enhances the overall quality of the consumer experience, makes visitors feel cared for, and ultimately increases loyalty to the store. Stores that pay attention to

details such as scent, lighting, and music have proven more effective in building a positive image and encouraging repeat consumer visits.

#### 4.1.2 interaction with products

In addition to the store atmosphere, direct interaction with products is a decisive factor in the offline retail decision-making process. Physical interaction allows consumers to assess more comprehensively through touch, observation, and even tasting before purchasing. In this study, two main sub-themes emerged related to interaction with products: the habit of touching or trying products before purchase, and the experience of trying food or beverages in-store. Below is an explanation of the findings for each sub-theme from the consumer perspective.

##### 4.1.2.1 touching & trying products

Almost all respondents stated that they actively touched, held, or tried products before purchasing to ensure quality, check texture, packaging, or compare one item with another. This direct interaction is important as part of a more confident shopping decision-making process and minimizes the risk of disappointment after purchase. The following are diverse responses from various informants:

*"Yes, I have. The condition of products in stores is generally good." (MI)*

*"I have tried to convince myself to buy." (SN)*

*"Yes, I usually check the texture of items before buying, especially fashion products." (RK)*

*"Yes, by trying it first, I can find out the quality of the product." (IS)*

*"Yes, for electronic goods, I make sure all the features work first." (SA)*

*"Yes, it is important to check the packaging, especially for food." (NA)*

*"Yes, to see the quality of the product being sold." (JF)*

*"Yes, I usually hold it first to check the weight and quality of the item." (HL)*

This sub-theme confirms consumers rely heavily on direct sensory experiences when shopping offline. The habit of touching and trying products not only increases confidence in purchasing but also serves as an essential form of quality control in the eyes of consumers. This is why physical stores still have a unique advantage over online shopping, especially for products that require direct sensory assessment or physical quality.

##### 4.1.2.2 trying food/beverages

Some respondents have also tried food or beverages in stores as part of their shopping experience. This activity ensures the taste and quality, or simply, out of curiosity, before buying in larger quantities. The experience of trying food/beverage products on site elicited mixed responses—some found the experience very helpful. In contrast, others consider it ordinary or not very influential in their shopping decisions. The following are quotes from various respondents:

*"Yes, I tried food or beverage products in stores so I could know the taste and quality." (IM)*

*"Yes, to make sure the food or beverage tastes good." (NS)*

*"No, I usually just buy it if I'm sure about the brand." (AM)*

*"Yes, it makes me trust the quality of the product more." (AMY)*

*"Yes, I usually try the tester first, but sometimes it tastes ordinary." (HL)*

*"Yes, but sometimes it doesn't influence my decision; it depends on my mood." (SA)*

*"Yes, it's normal." (JF)*

This sub-theme shows that providing food/beverage testers or samples in stores can increase consumer trust and comfort, but the impact remains highly personal. For some, trying the product is the key factor in decision-making, while brand or recommendations are still more dominant for others. Nevertheless, providing testers is still relevant to increase store appeal and add value to the consumer shopping experience.

#### *4.1.3 emotions & shopping experience*

In addition to physical interaction with products, the shopping experience in stores is also greatly influenced by emotional aspects that arise during visits. The emotions consumers feel are not only created by the physical atmosphere, but also by social interactions, service quality, and the overall comfort of the store environment. In this study, two critical sub-themes describe the relationship between consumer emotions and shopping experiences: the variations in feelings experienced while in the store, the influence of atmosphere on visit duration, and consumers' tendency to linger. The following is a breakdown of the findings for each sub-theme.

##### *4.1.3.1 feelings in the store*

The feelings experienced by consumers while in the store vary greatly, ranging from comfortable, focused, neutral, to very excited.

The atmosphere of the store and the quality of service significantly determine the emotions that arise during shopping. Many respondents emphasized that physical comfort, staff friendliness, and spatial layout contribute to a positive emotional experience. The following are various experiences expressed by multiple informants:

*"Comfortable and focused, especially when it's not too crowded." (NS)*

*"Comfortable, especially if the place is clean and the service is good." (MA)*

*"I feel neutral, sometimes I just want to finish shopping quickly." (IM)*

*"Excited, especially if there are discounts and the atmosphere is supportive." (JA)*

*"I often feel relaxed and not in a hurry." (RI)*

*"I feel satisfied and at home when the service is friendly." (IF)*

*"If the room is neat and cool, I enjoy staying longer." (HL)*

This sub-theme shows that consumers' emotions when shopping in stores are greatly influenced by the physical atmosphere and the quality of interaction they experience. Stores that create a comfortable, safe, and pleasant atmosphere will find it easier to build customer loyalty and encourage repeat visits. Conversely, if the atmosphere is not supportive, consumers want to finish shopping quickly.

##### *4.1.3.1 the effect of atmosphere on visit duration*

A comfortable, clean, and tidy store atmosphere has been proven to make consumers feel more at home and spend more time browsing products. Conversely, consumers will speed up their shopping activities if the atmosphere is unsupportive or unattractive. Respondents mentioned various situations that made them want to linger or quickly leave the store, such as:

*"Yes, if the store is comfortable, I can spend a long time browsing." (IM)*

*"I often feel comfortable wandering around if the product layout is attractive." (FI)*

*"Yes, the calm atmosphere of the store makes me want to stay there longer." (IHS)*

*"Yes, especially if there is nice music and the room is not hot." (JA)*

*"Sometimes, when it's not crowded and I can freely look at the items." (MA)*

*"If the staff are friendly and helpful, I prefer to stay longer in the store." (RI)*

This sub-theme emphasizes the importance of creating a conducive store atmosphere to extend visit duration and increase the likelihood of impulse purchases. Space layout, cleanliness, staff friendliness, and the overall store atmosphere are essential factors in building a pleasant shopping experience, which ultimately can increase turnover and customer loyalty.

#### *4.1.4 loyalty & customer satisfaction*

Furthermore, customer satisfaction and loyalty are essential indicators of the success of sensory marketing strategies implemented by offline retail stores. Loyalty is not built from just one aspect, but is the result of the accumulation of all customers' positive experiences during their visits. In this context, the intention to return to the store and the pleasant experiences remembered by consumers are the two main sub-themes that reflect both the level of satisfaction and the commitment of consumers to continue choosing the same store in the future. Below is a detailed explanation based on the informants' narratives for each sub-theme.

##### *4.1.4.1 intention to return to the store*

Most respondents admitted they were interested in returning to the same store if their previous visit was enjoyable. The main factors driving the intention to return include the comfort of the store atmosphere, product availability, cleanliness, competitive prices, and an atmosphere that encourages browsing and exploring items. The following are variations of responses from informants:

*"Yes, because I still want to look around." (IM)*

*"Yes, the products are quite complete, clean, and reasonably priced." (NS)*

*"I like to come back because the store is always neat and the service is friendly." (RK)*

*"Yes, the items are quite complete, and they provide quality products." (AM)*

*"The place is clean and the atmosphere is nice for shopping for a long time." (NA)*

*"Yes, because it's fun to shop there." (IS)*

*"Very interested, the place is comfortable, Matahari in Bone." (JF)*

This sub-theme shows that the overall experience greatly influences consumer loyalty during a visit to the store. Comfort, cleanliness, and product availability are the main factors that create an emotional bond and encourage consumers to choose that store as their primary shopping destination. The intention to return indicates the store's success in building a positive reputation and customer satisfaction.

##### *4.1.4.2 fun things about shopping*

The most enjoyable experiences that consumers remember when shopping are generally related to friendly service, complete product availability, a comfortable atmosphere, and attractive

promotions or discounts. These things make the shopping process feel more personal, easy, and enjoyable for consumers. Here are some responses from various respondents:

*"Friendly service and many products available." (SN)*

*"I like it when there are big discounts; it makes shopping more fun." (FI)*

*"Friendly service." (AM)*

*"Comfortable atmosphere and convenient product layout." (HL)*

*"Comfortable atmosphere." (JF)*

*"Offers many discounts." (IHS)*

*"Provides products according to needs, supportive atmosphere." (IM)*

This sub-theme emphasizes that customer satisfaction comes not only from price or product availability, but is also influenced by the quality of human interaction, comfort, and positive surprises such as discounts. Friendly service and a warm store atmosphere can enhance the shopping experience, increase the likelihood of repeat purchases, and build long-term loyalty.

#### *4.1.5 suggestions for store improvement*

In conclusion, consumers' experiences while shopping at offline retail stores also gave rise to various aspirations and expectations regarding service quality improvements in the future. Consumers' suggestions and criticisms reflect increasingly high demands for standards of comfort, quality, and service innovation. The following are various suggestions and input from consumers that can serve as strategic references for retail managers in creating a superior shopping experience in the future.

Most respondents have various suggestions for improving the shopping experience at the store. These suggestions include requests for the store to pay more attention to product quality, enhance service friendliness, maintain store cleanliness, offer more affordable prices, and increase discount programs or promotions to make the shopping experience more attractive and enjoyable. Respondents also highlighted the importance of a comfortable store atmosphere to make visitors feel at home. The following are various inputs from informants:

*"Provide quality products, friendly staff, and a comfortable atmosphere." (IM)*

*"Maintain store cleanliness and be more friendly." (SN)*

*"Just improve the service so that buyers feel appreciated." (MA)*

*"Give more discounts, especially on weekends." (IHS)*

*"The store atmosphere and affordable prices, so that there will be more visitors." (JA)*

*"More diverse products and responsive staff." (RK)*

*"The store should hold promotions more often to attract more customers." (AM)*

*"Facilities such as toilets or waiting rooms could also be improved." (IS)*

This sub-theme shows that customer satisfaction and loyalty are determined not only by the products sold but also by the holistic experience in the store. Demands for friendly service, cleanliness, discounts, and competitive prices indicate that consumers are becoming more critical and demanding comprehensive quality. These suggestions from consumers can serve as valuable input for store management to enhance competitiveness, improve services, and create

a more friendly, clean, and comfortable shopping environment, thereby retaining and attracting more customers in the future.

#### 4.2 Discussion

This study confirms that sensory marketing strategies are essential in shaping consumer shopping experiences and decision-making processes in offline retail stores. Findings obtained from interviews and participatory observations in various local stores in Bone Regency show that physical factors and store ambience, interaction with products, emotional experiences, satisfaction, loyalty, and suggestions for improvement are interconnected and mutually reinforcing in creating memorable shopping experiences and encouraging repeat purchase intentions.

One of the most dominant themes was the importance of lighting in shaping visual experience and consumer comfort. Almost all respondents emphasized that stores with bright, even, and non-glaring lighting made it easier for them to browse products, compare colors, and increase their exploration interest. Optimal lighting has been proven to enhance product quality perception, create a warm atmosphere, and keep consumers in the store longer. These findings align with the research of [Krishna \(2012\)](#) and [Spence \(2020\)](#), which confirms that visual elements like lighting significantly influence perception, mood, and purchase intent. [Sarstedt et al., \(2023\)](#) and [Nghiem-Phú \(2017\)](#) even state that lighting is one of the primary sensory elements in physical store strategies to communicate brand image and differentiation from competitors.

In addition to visual elements, auditory elements such as music or background sounds create a comfortable, pleasant, and entertaining store atmosphere. Most respondents felt positive effects from music played at the right volume, making the store feel lively and not boring. The right music can also slow down visitors' perceived time, making them more likely to linger, as noted by [Peck & Childers \(2008\)](#), [Perks & Shumba \(2023\)](#), and [Spence \(2020\)](#), who found that music tempo and genre compatibility with the store's concept can increase visit duration, positive mood, and the tendency to make impulse purchases. Music has also been proven to help divert attention from crowds, create personal space amid the hustle and bustle, and improve the perception of service quality ([Arora, 2025](#); [Shahid et al., 2022](#)).

Although less explored by local retailers, scent is gaining attention. Some respondents consciously noted that the scent of soap, store perfume, or certain products made them feel more comfortable, focused, and even want to return to shop at the store. Studies by [Soars \(2009\)](#) and [Spence \(2020\)](#) show that scent can create strong emotional associations, strengthen brand identity, and increase visitors' desire to stay longer. In the context of Bone Regency, the combination of good lighting, comfortable music, and pleasant scents has proven to strengthen the store's image and increase customer loyalty.

These findings support the S-O-R (Stimulus-Organism-Response) model, which states that environmental stimuli in a store—light, sound, scent—influence consumers' psychological conditions (organism) such as mood, emotions, and attention, which then trigger behavioral responses, including the intention to linger in the store and purchase decisions ([Krishna, 2012](#); [Mehrabian & Russell, 1974](#); [Sarstedt et al., 2023](#)). A well-designed physical store environment has been proven to increase comfort, reinforce perceptions of quality, and build a deeper emotional experience.

In addition, one of the main advantages of physical stores over e-commerce is the opportunity for consumers to touch, hold, or try products directly. Almost all respondents in this study

emphasized the importance of tactile experience for fashion, electronics, food, and household items. The ability to touch and try products allows consumers to make direct sensory assessments of quality, texture, packaging, weight, and functionality before purchasing. These findings are consistent with previous studies indicating that physical and multisensory store experiences are key factors in reducing the risk of disappointment, strengthening confidence in purchases, and encouraging spontaneous purchases ([Pal & Srivastava, 2024](#); [Whitestone, 2017](#)).

For food/beverage products, providing testers or samples has been proven to increase consumer confidence and facilitate decision-making. However, the effect of testers is highly influenced by mood and personal preferences. Some consumers find the experience of trying a product very helpful, while others still prioritize brand factors or family recommendations. Studies by ([Krishna & Elder, 2011, 2021](#)) confirm that gustatory experiences (tasting) can directly accelerate purchasing decisions for food and beverage products. However, the effect remains contingent on the product's uniqueness and consumers' perceptions of the experience's added value.

This multisensory interaction reinforces the theory of Multisensory Marketing ([Krishna, 2012; Spence et al., 2014](#)), emphasizing that engaging more senses enriches the shopping experience, strengthens brand associations, and enhances perceptions of product quality and trust. In the case of Bone Regency, the tactile experience and direct exploration are the main reasons physical stores are still preferred, especially for high-risk products or those requiring a thorough physical assessment.

Furthermore, the emotions consumers feel while in the store vary widely. Still, most highlight the importance of physical comfort, staff friendliness, cleanliness, and store layout in creating a positive mood during shopping. A calm atmosphere, friendly service, and cleanliness contribute to creating satisfaction, relaxation, and even increasing the desire to return at another time. These findings align with the S-O-R model, where the store environment acts as a stimulus triggering emotional reactions (organism) such as comfort, happiness, or even excitement when discovering discounts and promotions (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974; Sarstedt et al., 2023). Research by [Cachero-Martínez & Vázquez-Casielles \(2021\)](#) and [Shahid et al. \(2022\)](#) confirms that emotional experiences during shopping are the primary factor in building customer loyalty. Pleasant and memorable experiences increase the likelihood of repeat purchases and make the store a primary shopping destination. At the same time, the study by [Donovan et al. \(1994\)](#) and [Morrin & Tepper \(2021\)](#) shows that a positive store atmosphere, a combination of warm service, and a supportive environment will enhance the shopping experience, strengthen emotional bonds, and ultimately create customer advocacy among loyal customers. The theme of the influence of atmosphere on visit duration also reinforces this argument.

On the other hand, a comfortable, clean, and well-organized store has been proven to increase visit duration and consumers' tendency to explore more products. This increases the likelihood of impulse purchases—a phenomenon also found by [Donovan et al. \(1994\)](#), [Nayak & Satpathy \(2024\)](#), [Sarstedt et al. \(2023\)](#), and [Spence et al. \(2014\)](#), who noted that multisensory experiences and positive atmospheres can encourage broader exploration and prompt consumers to make purchases beyond their initial plans. Meanwhile, the intention to return to the store indicates the success of the sensory experience provided by local retailers. Nearly all respondents expressed interest in returning to shops that offer enjoyable experiences, product variety, friendly service, competitive prices, and an atmosphere conducive to lingering. These findings are supported by research by [Bustamante & Rubio \(2017\)](#), [Dalmoro et al. \(2019\)](#), and [Srivastava](#)

[& Kaul \(2016\)](#), which concluded that consumer loyalty in the context of physical retail is not only determined by products and prices but also by the quality of the holistic experience felt during shopping.

Consumer satisfaction is also built through personalized service, easily accessible product displays, and the ease of finding attractive promotions or discounts. Consumers feel valued when served with kindness, provided with clear information, and allowed to explore the store freely. This reinforces the theory of Multisensory Marketing that the added value of sensory interactions and personalized service becomes the primary differentiation for physical stores amid omnichannel competition ([Krishna, 2012](#); [Krishna & Elder, 2021](#); [Spence et al., 2014](#)). Pleasant and memorable experiences, whether through service or store ambience, strengthen consumers' intent to recommend the store to others, build customer advocacy, and enhance long-term retention. Recent studies also highlight that customer advocacy and word-of-mouth are increasingly crucial in the digital era, as sensory experiences in physical stores are difficult to replicate online ([Siqueira Jr et al., 2019](#); [Sweeney et al., 2020](#); [Torabi et al., 2021](#)).

The findings also indicate several suggestions provided by respondents to improve the quality of the shopping experience in stores. Requests for stores to pay more attention to product quality, improve staff friendliness, maintain cleanliness, offer more competitive prices, and increase promotions or discounts indicate that consumers are becoming more critical and demanding of comprehensive quality. Suggestions for additional facilities such as toilets, waiting areas, or children's play areas also indicate that consumers desire a more family-friendly and holistic shopping experience, as mentioned by [Anggraeni & Silalahi \(2021\)](#), [Arora \(2025\)](#), and [Rivani et al. \(2023\)](#). The call for stores to offer more discount programs and improve customer service aligns with the findings of [Kartomo \(2024\)](#), [Lewis \(2004\)](#), and [Nastasoiu & Vandenbosch \(2019\)](#) who stated that financial incentives and positive social interactions can strengthen customer loyalty in physical stores.

Compared to international literature, the findings of this study generally support recent research on the effectiveness of sensory marketing in enhancing consumer experience and loyalty ([Krishna, 2012](#); [Sarstedt et al., 2023](#); [Spence et al., 2014](#)). However, the local context in Bone Regency reveals specific needs for more personalized service, cleanliness, and clear product information. Unlike in developed countries, where digital technology and automation have become standard, local consumers still rely on direct interaction, personal touch, and comfort as key factors in their purchasing decisions.

This study also highlights gaps that need to be addressed by local retailers—namely, the integration of sensory elements with promotional strategies, staff training, and service innovation. Not all stores have the resources to implement sensory concepts optimally; some still rely on intuitive strategies without a research foundation. Therefore, the results of this study can serve as important input for local retailers to be more structured in designing store atmospheres, managing customer experiences, and building loyalty amid increasingly intense omnichannel competition.

#### 4.2.1 practical implications and policy recommendations

The findings of this study provide several practical implications for retailers in semi-urban areas. First, store management must invest in lighting, layout, and other sensory elements to enhance comfort and positive mood during consumer visits. Second, staff training on friendly service, product knowledge, and interpersonal communication skills should be a priority to improve interaction quality and maintain customer satisfaction. Third, providing food/beverage samples, attractive promotions, good hygiene, and facility management will increase added

value and differentiate stores from competitors. Fourth, periodic evaluations of the store atmosphere and customer experience are necessary so that retailers can respond quickly and adaptively to changes in consumer preferences. Collaboration with local communities, digitizing product information, and integrating app-based loyalty programs can also be innovative strategies to retain consumers amid digital competition.

From a policy perspective, support from local governments and retail associations is crucial for training, mentoring, and facilitation in developing sensory marketing strategies for retail SMEs. Empowering local retailers through education, access to resources, and strengthening the digital ecosystem will enhance the competitiveness of physical stores and preserve retail diversity amid the digital economic transformation.

## 5. Conclusion

This study confirms that sensory marketing strategies, manifested in managing physical factors such as lighting, music, aroma, and product touch experiences, are proven to be highly effective in increasing comfort, positive emotions, and consumer loyalty in offline retail stores. The optimal application of sensory elements extends the duration of visits and increases the likelihood of purchases, but also builds a memorable shopping experience and strengthens consumers' intention to make repeat purchases. Direct interaction with products, friendly service, a clean and tidy store atmosphere, and attractive promotions are the main factors influencing customer perception, satisfaction, and loyalty in the era of omnichannel competition. This study also confirms the superiority of physical stores as a multisensory experience arena that digital channels cannot completely replace.

Although it provides a comprehensive overview, this study has several limitations. First, the scope of the study was limited to offline retail in one semi-urban area, so the results cannot be fully generalized to the context of retail in large cities or other areas with different consumer characteristics. Second, the data obtained were qualitative and highly dependent on the perceptions and subjective experiences of the informants, so there is a possibility of narrative bias. Third, this study did not specifically distinguish the impact of each sensory element quantitatively, so the relative contribution of each component to purchasing decisions has not been accurately measured.

Further research is highly recommended to expand the scope to different regions, store scales, and market segments to obtain a more varied picture of the effectiveness of sensory marketing. Quantitative or mixed-method studies with a larger sample size could be conducted to statistically measure the specific influence of each sensory element on purchasing behavior. Additionally, exploring the role of integration between sensory and digital strategies (e.g., physical stores connected to digital apps or loyalty programs) is highly relevant in responding to evolving consumer behavior in the omnichannel era. Longitudinal research to monitor changes in consumer perceptions and loyalty over the long term, as well as studies on sensory strategies in modern retail adopting green retail or sustainable marketing concepts, will further strengthen retail competitiveness in Indonesia.

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