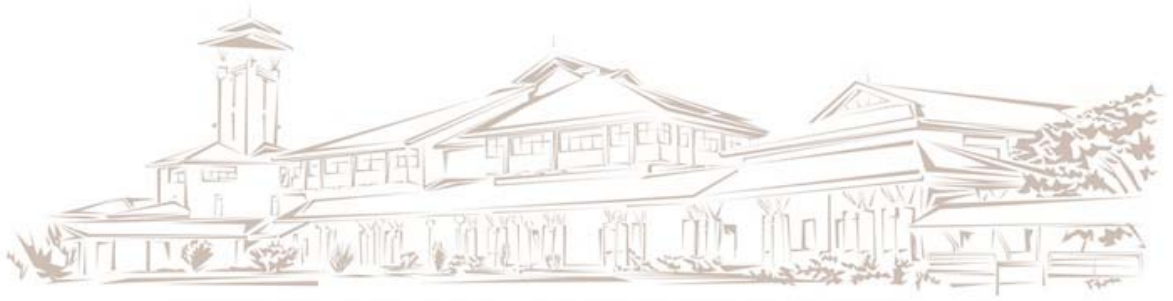


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great by
deeds, not by
birth"

-Chanakya

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Using Sensory Memorabilia to design Experience Product

Atanu Adhikari¹

¹Professor, Marketing Management, Indian Institute of Management, Kozhikode, IIMK Campus PO, Kunnamangalam, Kozhikode, Kerala 673570, India; Email: atanu.adhikari@iimk.ac.in, Phone Number (+91) 495 – 2809241

Using Sensory Memorabilia to design Experience Product

Abstract

Pine and Gilmore (1998) defined experience as a bundle of sensory memorabilia that engages customers' five senses and delivers a sensory feeling. When a customer buys an experience product, she pays for associating herself with a series of memorable events that an experience provider stages. The main objective of the chapter is to communicate how organizations can develop an independent experience product and offer it in the market. Successful development of experience product requires understanding consumer's esteem level needs. Consequently, supplier is required to design the product mix considering several aspects of such needs and consumer behavior for the attributes which has emotional component. It further requires engaging the consumers in the process of delivery so that they are associated with the offering. The chapter focuses on the process of developing experience product. The chapter deals with several components of experience product development, the role of experience product in stimulating consumer's hedonic behavior and multi-sensory component of experience product mix.

Keywords: Experience product, consumers' sensory feelings, and emotional product.

1. Introduction

Until very recently, experience used to be considered as an integral part of service delivery. Experience product first received its independent identity in the book "Experience Economy" authored by Pine and Gilmore (1999). However, as said by the authors, this kind of product is yet to receive adequate recognition as a new genre of business. According to these authors and few other researchers, considering experience as an independent product, separating it from service and appropriately pricing presents opportunities for enormous surplus to the marketers. In spite of this, development of experience product has not received adequate attention and systematic treatment from academicians as well as practitioners. The reason that the experience product is unrecognized by the researchers and practitioners may be due to a component of experience is in built in most of the products and services to enhance the product appeal or the service quality. And that is why experience is seen more as feature of a product than a complete product.

Consumer's preference for pleasure is well documented in marketing and consumer behavior literature of hedonism and utilitarianism. Hirschman and Holbrook¹, Childers² explained hedonic experience as pleasure, fantasy and fun. According to these authors, hedonic consumption is individual specific where consumers' intensity of association with a hedonic experience is determined by their own imaginative power and participation. Jones and others³ studied individual's hedonic consumption in sports through river rafting where they found significant association of place and time.

2. What is an experience product?

Pine and Gilmore⁴ (1998) defined experience as a bundle of sensory memorabilia that engages customers' five senses and delivers a sensory feeling. When a customer buys an experience product, he pays to make himself associated with a series of memorable events that an experience provider stages. A company delivers experience when it stages some events that engage the customers in a memorable way for a prolonged duration. A suitable example of an experience product is the product offering in Disney shop. Mother and daughter usually go to Disney shop to kid's items or a doll. In addition to dolls and other gifts Disney shops offer the daughter experience of dressing like Barbie doll or little mermaid; taking photographs, stage them singing rhymes with in-house orchestra. While selling dolls or toys are selling products, staging an event for the kids and charging for that is what is called experience. Similarly, in the context of a restaurant, experience is staged in terms of external and internal ambiance (theme ambiance), specialty of food offerings when chef comes to the customer and explains how the dish is prepared. Such type of offerings caters to consumers' esteem needs. These needs, as in Maslow's need hierarchy, lead a consumer to engage in array of memorabilia, thereby enabling the restaurant to provide a distinct offering.

Majority of the researchers in marketing research have studied the consumers' decision making process as cognitive process where consumers are assumed to be rational and they take decision based on their rationality of standard economic theory. Consequently, the emotional dimension of choice⁵ was neglected to a great extent emphasizing the functional aspect of the product. There are very few researches who have considered experience of performing art, concert, fashion, theme park and similar offering as an independent product. However, in such products, desires for memorable events dominate the rational behavior of the consumers.

Experience products have multi-sensory, fantasy and emotive attribute that engage consumer's five sense organs so that it involves emotional stimulation in experiential form. The fundamental attribute of an experience product is consumer involvement. While consuming the product, the consumers go along the process. For example, when we go to Disney shop to buy a little mermaid for our daughter, we buy a product, but when the Disney shop stages a song where Barbie's dance, they actually sell a complete experience product where the consumers are involved in the process of creation and consumption. In many cases the experiential desire overtakes satisfying tangible needs and consumers look for products that satisfy their multi-sensory images and emotional needs.

A theoretical model on types of experience and experiential interaction to be added here

3. Developing an experience product

Developing an experience product should rely on product attributes that stimulates five sense organs of the consumers. It is necessary to engage the sensory channels of the consumers for consumption of experience products. Researches in experiential consumption have rarely focused on the nuances for developing an experience product. They have rather considered experience as a component integrated with service. Hence, experience is looked as a service attribute than a separate product. However, treating experience offering as a separate product can give enormous surplus to the organization. Careful development of experience as independent product and placing them in right segment can create very high consumer value.

The objective of the chapter is to communicate how organizations can develop an independent experience product and offer it in the market. Successful development of experience product requires understanding consumer's involvement in the product in sensory level. Consequently, supplier is required to design the product mix considering several aspects of consumers' experiential needs and consumer behavior. It further requires engaging the consumers in the process of delivery so that they are associated with the offering. The chapter focuses on the process of developing experience product. The chapter deals with several features of experience product development, the role of experience product in stimulating consumer's hedonic behavior, multi-sensory component of experience product mix and the role of enjoyment and fun.

4. Features of experience product

The experience, while seems similar to service has some distinct features. Experience product requires participation and/or involvement of the consumers and requires physical and emotional engagement. Experience product satisfies the need of participation where the level of engagement of the consumer is of varied degree. The extent of engagement with the product defines it how much experiential the product is and accordingly it changes the sensory level of the consumers. Experience product makes the consumer to pass through a set of activities where they encounter psychological need satisfaction. In Maslow's need hierarchy, the experience product satisfies one's esteem need. It can be referred as more psychological and using the term coined by Alvin Toffler, it is called 'psychologization'. The relationship between the consumer and the product is like the relationship between two individuals. That relationship begins with a *sensory input* and evolves over time

We all use our five sense organs all the time for sight, smell, taste, hear and touch. Marketing science has recognized emotion as sixth sense and one of the most powerful sense, which influences the rational behavior of consumes. The important feature of experience product is to make consumers directly experiences these five senses during consumption of the product. It is important for experience product so that the consumption process of the consumers create an effect on these five senses. However, there is very limited approach till date to distinguish the affective influence of these five senses and hardly any marketer has recognized the intrinsic bondage between these five

senses and emotional appeal of an experience product. Emotional personality of an experience product is achieved when use of these five senses create sensory experience. Sensory experience has instantaneous effect and is capable in influencing the demand of the experience product. Following are some ways to create sensory experience in developing experience product.

4.1 Using colors in creating sensory experience

Using color in building experience product does not essentially limit its choice and use visual attraction or making an immediate effect of an image. Color tells more than just attractiveness and brightness when it comes as a component of an experience product. According to Mark Gobe⁶, color acts as a vehicle of emotional experience. It conveys crucial information with aesthetic appeal that creates a sensory feeling in consumers of experience product. Right type of color activates thoughts and memories leading to particular mode of perception⁷.

The choice of color should represent the personality of the product or the brand). For example if a company is in process of developing kids product should use the color that appeal the kids in emotional level. Here the product developer should concentrate on the visual appearance of the color which is most immediately processed by the kids and reach their memory. However, when marketers develop an experience product for adults, it should focus on in depth user approach that would have prolonged affective association. The personality traits of the consumers and their overall characteristic would govern the depth and breadth of the color of experience product.

4.2 Using sound in creating sensory experience

What do we feel when we hear sound of thunder, cuckoo sings on spring or water drop on full bucket? This makes an immediate and uncontrolled effect on our brain, isn't it? This type of sounds not only occupy consumers' mind but also engage their emotion into a memorable experience. Sound has a very affective approach in stimulating emotion that lead to consumers' memorable experience because it circumvents the rational mind and enter directly into emotional zone in which emotion driven consumers enjoy⁸. As suggested by the author, sound can add mood, meaning, tone, and understanding. Using of sound in experience product for the sake of using it doesn't add much to the memorability of the product; however, used with mind and idea, sound can add a great transaction to the emotional appeal of the product and can deliver memorable customer experience.

4.3 Using environment design in creating sensory experience

Experiential environment in the interior and the exterior of the experience product stimulates the consumers' affective senses. These affective senses influence the consumers to buy experience product. Marketers may use insights to capture the pleasurable and desirable experience of the consumers⁹ by providing ergonomic environment, pleasurable interior and exterior of the products. Several researchers¹⁰

discussed the role of affection and pleasure in user-product communication. The affective personalities of the product influence the consumers' response towards the experience product and their purchase decision.

Engineering is one of the most effective ways to create customer-centric environment. It can develop a relationship between product experience and product profiles that can elicit memorable experience to the consumers. Schutte¹¹ explained Kansai engineering method in creating customer experience through design. This type of engineering is used to create aesthetic and ergonomic attributes of the product that describe affective phenomena of the consumption. The degree of affectiveness describes whether the experience will be short-term or long lasting.

Environmental designs distinguish and deliver aesthetic pleasure of an experience product. It is a set of affective creation that elicits users' emotion about the product¹². The degree of which the consumers' senses are involved in the consumption detects the strength of the experience product in stimulating cerebral cortex of the consumers. take the example when you check in a business hotel in your business trip. When you enter into the lobby, you encounter a man looking like a leopard. The surroundings of the corridor are with artificial plantation to give a look of the approach of a forest. While moving towards dinner room, you find a woman in lion outfit. When you entered the dinner room, it was looking like a forest. The entire staffs were dressed in jangle suit and the restaurant was full of green and yelling of Tarzan. Such kind of environment would instigate your experiential feelings and influence you to remain loyal and visit the same hotel next time. Here in the aesthetic level of environment design, the hotel engage more than one sense organs in creating sensory memorabilia.

4.4 Using Fragrance in the environment to stimulate customers

While interior and exterior design are the main component in creating environmental experience, there are a few softer and sensual elements as well that create consumers' experience in the environment. Fragrance is one of such intangible elements. Research says that smell is the strongest sense among five senses. Research says odor has much higher potency to generate sensory feeling than any other senses. Fragrance can act as an important element in creating experiential environment in delivering experience product. Here scent is a feature of the environment that acts as product stimuli for the experience product. Many consumers are attached with the scent in emotional level that provokes their exclusive personality and identity. Scent stimulated consumers' affective personality in a coherent but wide way in their emotional system.

There are number of products where scent can be a deciding differentiator without having any functional reason. Imagine how fragrance influence your attitude towards the product when you enter Body Shop! If you are virtually like other, the research says that fragrance generate positive attitude towards a product to a great extent. Similar kind of attitude is observed for many other products like shampoo, paper napkin, freshener tissue, eraser or pencil, gum, body oil, hair oil, candle etc. with fragrance People love scented products and choose them over other. Research says people give scented products other

positive attribute only on the basis of their smell¹³ (Gobe, 2005). Fragrance in consumer environment also can act as contributing differentiator. Research says customer spend more time in a scented shopping space than that is not scented. Well planned smell encourages customers and can generate sales. Looking into that many companies made their shopping space environment with seductive scent.

4.5 Using product design in creating sensory experience

Shape is an important factor when designing an experience product to give a product a distinctive image which will add affective feature to a cognitive product and differentiate it from just a service or a product. Shape can arrest emotion and help enhancing emotional level of the product. An elegantly designed perfume bottle or restaurant table and chair instigate consumer's affective sense.

Designing a customer's sensory experience is significantly different from just designing a product or package or logo. Design of experience is the work more of a psychologist, anthropologist and sociologist than mere graphic designer or engineer. Design is understood as a core activity by bringing to light the emotional meaning products and services have¹⁴. Developing emotional personality of an experience product is blending aesthetic, appeal and ergonomic in the product. Design is not only one manifestation of brand identity but it creates a memorable impression (Gobe, 2001). Design is more about emotion and imagination than mere objective utility. In my opinion, design is a SIGNATURE of an experience product. It should be

S - Societal

I - Interactive

G – Graphically expressive

N – Note worthy

A – Associated with brand or company.

T – Tantalizing

U – Universal

R – Retain information

E – Emotionally meaningful.

Concept of design has changed from visibility and impact to emotionality and connection. However, the design should convey same emotional personality as the product does. The graphic, color combination and aesthetics should work as an emotional contact between the product and the consumer¹⁵.

A theoretical model on antecedents and consequences of experience products and with sensory elements and their interaction to be added here

5. Consumer – product interaction in creating sensory experience

The emerging interest in experience product has transformed the marketing process from mere product delivery to consumer-product interaction. In the consumer product interaction, the users are involved in the creation and consumption process where their emotions and sense organs experience the present outcome as well as anticipate forthcoming outcome of the particular product. Consumer's affective experience with the product and their involvement in the consumption process may be fantasizing to them. It means that one would think himself as an actor of the entire event staged. At the same time consumer's imaginative reaction to the consumption process increases desire towards experience product consumption. While evaluating an experience product, a consumer may imagine the feelings the experience product would deliver. The user-product interaction becomes synergetic when experience products are manufactured in combination of the consumers' characteristics and experiential characteristic of the product. Consumers' characteristic could be their personality, skills, culture and behavior. These consumer characteristics are different to different consumers and it creates different level of experience when interacts with product characteristics namely color, sound, smell, design and environment. An experience product can stimulate consumers' sensory feelings by way of how beautiful it looks in color, design and environment (vision), how fascinating it sounds (audio), how sensational its touch (touch), how appealing its fragrance (smell) and sometimes how tantalizing is the taste! The affective powers of these five 'touch points' waves consumers' emotion when it interacts with the consumers' personal characteristics¹⁶.

While main body of literature in environmental and design aesthetics focuses on their main effects, very few literature have studied the interaction effect of aesthetic and the individual. It is the additional experiential effect of the environmental aesthetic when consumers physically interact with the interior and exterior environment. This kind of interaction is more found in luxury.

6. Emotional attachment in creating sensory experience

How do we treat our guests at home? We serve them with snack, food or drink. Similar way, experience producer may create attachment with their consumer to create emotional feelings and affective phenomena through love, friendship and association to make them very intimate guest. Serving your customers with a glass of soft drink or attending the waiting guests with cup of coffee and snack can turn around the whole gamut of business at a very negligible cost. The return on such investments is very high and provides an emotional attachment with the customers. Customer feel themselves not only a reason of

business but a part of the family. These snacks, coffee and drink illustrate genial and caring nature of the organizations which rise above psychological theory and instead relied on sociability¹⁷.

7. Conclusion

The discussion of experience product development and its marketing draws largely from consumers' emotive quotient and product's affective or experiential concept. This combination of consumers' emotion and products experiential appeal explore the richness of human behavior when they interact with each other. It is true that experience product is the area of future research. Numbers of prospective research domains in experience product are yet to take off. Product and pricing of experience product as well as their promotion are completely new areas to be addressed both by academics and practitioners.

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Research Office

Indian Institute of Management Kozhikode

IIMK Campus P. O.,

Kozhikode, Kerala, India,

PIN - 673 570

Phone: +91-495-2809237/ 238

Email: research@iimk.ac.in

Web: <https://iimk.ac.in/faculty/publicationmenu.php>

