

Fecha de recepción: septiembre 2024

Fecha de aceptación: octubre 2024

Versión final: noviembre 2024

Brand perception and the role of the point of sale in the experience of purchase: case study

Joan-Francesc Fondevila-Gascón⁽¹⁾, Ramon Martin-Guart
Óscar Gutiérrez-Aragón⁽²⁾ y Mireia Caro-Tarrés⁽³⁾

Abstract: Brand perception and its application in the point of sale are innovative study objects. Relationship between them and possible effects are a focus of monetization and performance in the Broadband Society context. The well-known brand Zara tops the sales record of the multinational Inditex. This brand produces 70% of the sales of the whole group. Far from making use of traditional marketing, Zara turns out to be an expert brand in the application of sensory techniques, through the senses, and in creating an experience for consumers, as a buying impulse and especially treating the consumer as an emotional subject, connecting the consumer with the brand and promoting an emotional bond. These aspects are reflected in the points of sale of the brand, especially in the so-called Flagships or concept stores. Methodology is a case study, using a quantitative technique, using a survey. We analyze the brand's Flagship stores, as a point of direct contact with the consumer, trying to understand the relationship between perception and of the brand by the public, with respect to these iconic stores. We conclude the main elements that help shape the perception of the brand in Flagships stores are the combination of colours, brightness, shop window and fragrance.

Keywords: Sensory - marketing - flagship - perception - experience - senses - neuromarketing - brand - emotional - stores.

[Resúmenes en inglés y portugués en la página 169]

⁽¹⁾ PhD in Journalism and Communication Sciences (UAB), is “Catedrático de Universidad”, professor in Blanquerna-URL, EUM-UdG, UPF, Euncet-UPC, EAE Business School and Cesine. Director of CECABLE (Cable Studies Center), he has published more than 200 scientific articles. He has won awards by his professor, management and research activity. He has won four times six-years of research recognition. His awarded scientific blog (<http://www.telecomunicacionesyperiodismo.com/>) is the worldwide leader in his scientific sectors. He is the Principal Researcher of the Research Group on Innovative Monetization Systems on Digital Journalism and Marketing, and of the Research Group on Broadband and Journalism.

⁽²⁾ Serra Hünter fellow at the UdG. He holds a PhD in Communication in UPF. He is a member of the research group CAS (Communication, Advertising & Society) at UPF and collaborates with the GREC research group at Ramon Llull University on a project related to interactive advertising on television. His research focuses on advertising and its effectiveness, media digitalization and its consequences, as well as audience measurement. He has over 25 years of experience in leading advertising agencies (Ogilvy, Mindshare and Havas Media, among others). He has published diverse scientific articles.

*Dr. Óscar Gutiérrez-Aragón, PhD in Economy (UB), is professor in EUM-UdG and UB. He is member of the Research Group on Innovative Monetization Systems on Digital Journalism and Marketing, and of the Research Group on Broadband and Journalism. He has published diverse scientific articles.

⁽³⁾ Researcher in UdG and member of the Research Group on Innovative Monetization Systems on Digital Journalism and Marketing.

Introduction

This research aims to analyse the perception of a brand and its relationship in the purchase experience at the point of sale, analyzing the Flagships and their characteristics. This topic is relevant at a time when online sales are booming and digitization in commerce is a factor that diminishes physical commerce or stores, in the Broadband Society context (Fondevila-Gascón, 2013).

In this sense, this research studies the points of sale of the brand as a marketing tool, in an environment in which the consumer is constantly receiving conventional advertising. The Spanish Zara is a brand that currently attracts a large segment of the public and whose marketing is very different from what the big brands usually use, despite the fact that the success is indisputable.

The research begins with the theoretical and conceptual bases of neuromarketing, as an emerging discipline that wants to study consumer behaviour, and how it is applied to the point of sale to create a bond based on perceptions and experiences. According to Schmitt (2000), experience provides sensory values, and through these, the five human senses come into play; hearing, smell, sight, touch and taste, developing aromatic, haptic, musical and visual marketing, each used as a persuasive tool.

Considering the brand studied, the aim is to understand the importance of the customer experience in the brand's establishments. In order to achieve this objective, through this research, the main theoretical bases related to neuromarketing and the role of the point of sale are raised with the aim of identifying the brand perception of various consumer segments. Through the data obtained, the aim is to understand the relevance and role of the point of sale for the company's customers.

The main objective of the research is to understand the perception of consumers of the Zara company and to understand the relationship between its Flagships and the perception that consumers have of the brand. As specific objectives, we consider these: to identify the perception of the Zara brand by consumers (answering these questions: what perception of the Zara brand do consumers have of the brand?; how do Flagships condition the positioning of the studied brand?; how do consumers perceive the flagships of the Zara company?); to identify the relationship between the brand Flagships and the brand experience (answering these questions: how are the senses enhanced in Zara's points of sale?; what vision do consumers have about it; according to consumers, what are the most relevant aspects of marketing in the point of sale in Zara stores?); to identify the relevance of sensory elements in Zara establishments (answering these questions: what actions are developed in the management and conceptualization of Flagships to achieve the desired brand positioning?; how are the senses enhanced at the points of sale?); and to identify the main attitudes regarding the perception of the Zara brand and the possible socio-demographic variables that they condition (answering this question: how do socio-demographic variables condition the perception of the ZARA brand?).

Theoretical framework

The buying process of a consumer includes several stages until reaching the final decision, which is the purchase. Within this process, the person would identify the need, collect the information and evaluate the reward. However, during this process, there are factors that can influence it, and this is where neuromarketing comes into play.

Neuromarketing is a new discipline within marketing, usually connected with entrepreneurship (Mendoza Vargas et al., 2019). It wants to explain the attitudes of a consumer when buying a product, or to investigate the brain processes that explain people's perception, behaviour and decision-making in traditional marketing action (Álvarez, Mazzitelli & Tristezza, 2010). The enterprises are promoting the application of neuroscience research techniques to traditional marketing research, understanding the concept of neuroscience as the study of the nervous system (Coca Carasila, 2010).

Although it is a developing trend, several neuroscientific techniques link the concept of neuromarketing with real data, such as eye tracking, electroencephalography, magneto encephalogram or heart rhythm, others. The basic objectives of neuromarketing are to know how the human nervous system translates the stimuli to which it is exposed, to predict the consumer's behaviour in the face of these and to apply the results to concepts obtained to identify the most effective messages, formats and media. Through this discipline, a brand could differentiate the aspects that are most favourable to it when selling its product or service to its consumer. Neuromarketing strategies encompass advertising such as the product or service, brand communication, pricing policy and even, the point of sale.

The customer's interaction with the seller at the point of sale is a key aspect for the decision to purchase a product. From the moment of the creation of the brand, its branding is developed, but a link must also be created based on perceptions and experiences that the customer must experience with the brand. This is why the point of sale, considered the point of contact for the brand, is a key factor when it comes to expressing a brand. The commercial channel is considered as a key brand asset, considering the type of market to which the brand, the number of potential buyers, the geographic concentration of the market and the size of their orders (Shariq, 2018; Oh et altri, 2019; Boukis & Christodoulides, 2020). The introduction of e-commerce boosts social media impacts (Fondevila-Gascón, Mir-Bernal and Rom-Rodríguez, 2018; Fondevila-Gascón et altri, 2021 and 2022).

The point of sale must be a well-studied environment, including the brand image, the values of the brand, the audience we are addressing, and the position of this point of sale. In order to address these factors successfully, in a point of sale nothing can be left to chance, from the smell of the store when we enter, to the position of the product within it. All these strategies are neuromarketing strategies, where brands try to persuade our brain unconsciously through them. In fact, the environment (in this case, the point of sale) is in tune with the values that the company wants to convey and lists four points (environmental imperatives), which would be the objectives of a point of sale (Wheeler, 2018). These points are to create a unique experience and in line with the positioning of the brand; to create an experience and an environment that makes it easy for consumers to buy, and that inspires them to come back again; to create an environment that helps sellers complete the transaction; to understand the psychological effect of light.

Some companies use special aromas in their establishments, or defining colours, or even a type of light, contrasts or specific distributions. All these elements, on many occasions, are decisive for recognizing and differentiating one brand from another. In addition, they are all sensory or experiential strategies in retail that aim to affect the perceptions or emotions of the human senses, potentially conditioning the consumer's purchase decisions.

Experiential marketing

The increase in competition in the markets and the competitiveness between companies and brands mean that marketing must always adapt to the new realities and the new trends demanded by consumers (Moral & Fernández, 2012). Experiential marketing emerges as a new marketing discipline, just like neuromarketing.

The difference between traditional marketing and experiential marketing is that the latter wants to provide a great impetus for the purchase of the product, and the main objective of this is the experience of the consumer as an emotional subject within a holistic position. In fact, according to Kantar Media (2023), providing a positive customer experience creates brand promise. On the other hand, traditional marketing only considers the subject as rational and usually uses expository and informative strategies to define a product.

The objective is to provide stimuli that result in experiences, that is to say, the first to act is marketing (Schmitt, 2000), in short, an experience provides sensory, emotional, cognitive and behavioural values and, in this sense, there are frameworks that help manage a consumer's experiences. The first one is sensations (appeal to the senses with the aim of creating sensory experiences, related to the five senses that a person has: taste, smell, hearing, touch and sight). The second one is feelings, to create effective experiences in a way that affects the person's emotions, trying to change their mood and link the brand to a feeling, for example joy. The third one is thoughts, to create cognitive experiences and attract customers creatively, affecting the intellect and causing intrigue, surprise or even provocation. The fourth one is performances, to create bodily experiences and lifestyles, based on more natural, motivating and spontaneous lifestyle changes. The fifth one is relationships, related to sensations, feelings, thoughts and actions, they appeal to the individual's desire to improve.

Considering the importance of experiential marketing (also called marketing of the five senses), it is an advantageous factor compared to the digital world and online sales. As Marín and Gómez (2022) point out, there are different types of marketing. Aromatic marketing departs from aroma (75% of daily emotions are related to), thus being the sense that lasts most in an individual's memory. In this sense, companies use aromas to identify their brand or product with respect to their competitors (Suresh et altri, 2012; Berčík et altri, 2018 and 2021).

Haptic marketing is related to the information we acquire through the senses of touch, such as dealing with the customer, ordering the parts or cleaning the establishment. It is a fundamental aspect in the fashion industry and is one of the most important aspects because a consumer prefers to buy the product in the physical store (Jin, 2011; Ranaweera, Martin & Jin, 2021; Luangrath et altri, 2022).

In music marketing, music conveys messages and create a commercial atmosphere. Various aspects such as timbre, volume or tone are aspects to consider when choosing the type of music. Listening to music in a venue prolongs the stay on the surface, in addition to being a condition of the consumer's mood, causing an increase in consumption (Ogden, Ogden & Long, 2011).

About visual marketing, the main sensory tool in stores. Fashion establishments that use visual marketing strategies (such as colour combination, brightness or and layout of the establishment) improve the positioning of their brand in a positive way (Zamani, Abas & Amin, 2016; Hussain, 2019).

Flagship stores

A Flagship store is a branding strategy. This emerged in the United States like concept stores. However, the word "flagship" comes from the naval vocabulary where the flagship or captain represents the ship of maximum responsibility, the biggest, the best, and the one with the most military personnel. In this way, in a Flagship store we can find several areas

of a company, such as management or commercial presentation. A flagship store must reflect and represent its personality and essence or as calls it, it must be a “temple of the brand”, taking into account location, design and architecture (Martínez Navarro, 2016).

Flagship stores are a point of contact with the customer within the branding strategy (Jahn et altri, 2018), fundamental feature of a brand, very common in luxury (Moore, Doherty & Doyle, 2010; Arrigo, 2018). The customer experience is the result of the perception and feeling that a customer has after interacting, physically or virtually, in a purchase operation (Izquierdo, Ayestarán Crespo & García Guardia, 2018). This type of experience is defined as a consumption experience, and takes into account the emotional aspect, as idyllic or multidimensional situations are built that include adonic dimensions, such as feelings, fantasies and fun (Brakus, Schmitt & Zarantonello, 2009) and singular atmosphere (Blazquez, Boardman & Xu, 2019). It creates favourable consumer reactions (Nierobisch et altri, 2017).

A Flagship store or concept store serves to present the brand to the public. It is the presentation card of the company (Gómez Nieto & Tapia Frade, 2012), deducing brand investment, level of resources or recognition of the company. A leading company invests a lot of capital in it. However, a concept store plays a significant role in the perception of the company's positive image by the public and can even generate its acceptance. In a market where there are many brands, with a lot of competition between them, companies seek to stand out within their sector and more than ever, taking advantage of the trend of experiential marketing, brands have “overturned” offering experiences. These emblematic establishments are located in large, modern and cosmopolitan cities. These stores represent a communication plan for the different audiences of the organization: consumers (potential and real), suppliers, distributors, shareholders and media, the so-called stakeholders.

In the case of Zara, it is a clothing brand created by Inditex and founded by Amancio Ortega. It is considered one of the best known and most consumed fast fashion brands around the world (Chunling, 2020). According to the latest data from Inditex (2023), it would be the largest retail company worldwide with more than 2,000 stores and a presence on all continents. One of the main factors of its success is the design of the clothes that the brand offers at affordable prices. Zara is constantly following the new trends seen on the haute couture catwalks.

The history of Zara goes back to 1975 in A Coruña, Spain where Ortega already presented products similar to high-end pieces. The unexpected success of his brand led him to expand his business in the Iberian Peninsula. Thanks to the entrepreneurial vision of the founder, he originated the concept known as “instant fashion”, which consisted of changing collections quickly, bringing to the market a great variety of designs. It is therefore a new business model that allowed the brand to achieve today's success, in addition to being able to position itself in all major cities around the world. According to Interbrand (2020), Zara accounts for 70% of the sales of the Inditex group, being its main brand. However, apart from the physical sales channel, Zara also has the online store on its web portal and its application. These channels are also a great selling point for the company. On many occasions, through these portals, the customer is closer to the stores, such as to pick up the package of their online purchase. This fact is a marketing strategy for the consumer to experience the sensory experience of the physical point of sale (Popović-Šević et altri, 2021).

Zara stands out for its large stores in addition to having a wide facade, where the customer can see the brand from a great distance and show its power within the market. The way in which Zara presents itself in the market, through the blinds, is very noticeable with the choice of the best premises in the cities with windows illuminated with white light, which stand out compared to the other brands. The interior also highlights the space, comfort and distribution of each piece studied down to the millimetre, taking into account psychological aspects for each section, which is why in the women's sections the pieces are associated by colour. On the other hand, in the men's section, pieces are combined with the intention of creating "looks". The trend of constantly changing the interior of the stores by redesigning the spaces and changing the place of the products is in tune with the concept of instant fashion and the feeling of novelty (Gómez Gallo & Hernández Zelaya, 2020).

Its stores, especially the most modern ones, stand out for having the latest retail technologies, as the brand invests a lot of money in technological innovation, both online and physically. The fact of incorporating technology in its stores is a business model that combines online sales with the large network of physical sales. In this way, in its newest establishments, users can look at the catalogue of the new collection in digital format, as well as pick up the package ordered online, pay at the ATM or even ask to have the clothes you need in the fitting room through a screen. The point of sale is designed to bring experiential value to the brand (This personalization of the interaction also allows the integration of the logistics of the processes to be included.

That the five senses are used as a multi-sensory tool to appeal to emotions is a fact (Dueñas & Gómez-Carmona, 2022). For this reason, the studied brand uses diverse elements in its main sales channel. One key factor is visibility, through its stores located in the most commercial streets of the big cities, to capture attention and above all, as mentioned above, using shop windows as the main strategy. On the other hand, the warm lighting, the placement of the colours or the distribution of the collections is a factor that attracts the consumer.

About smell, all the Zara shops use the same smell. The company in charge of Zara's odotype is Trison. ZARA's odotype is defined as a soft aroma, so as not to distract the consumer, possibly floral although it varies according to the section, since in the kids section it has notes of lemon. In terms of listening, the playlist of the Zara stores is designed from the headquarters of the brand itself and cannot be modified by the staff of the establishments. Conventional music with commercial tones is not used but changes between techno-house and deep house. In periods of sales or in times of greater influx of consumers, music generates a faster pace and a higher volume. In terms of touching, all the clothes of the brand are within reach of the customer, on very few occasions the clothes are folded, if not they use the hangers, in order to facilitate the sense of touch to the consumer (Gómez & Hernández, 2020).

In sum, Zara maintains a policy of investing very little in advertising; on the contrary, it invests its profits in opening new stores. Their strategy is to design quickly and bring a wide variety of products to the market; this fact encourages brand lovers to be able to visit Zara constantly. A high-street store in Spain is visited on average three times a year, while in the case of Zara six multiplies this index. However, its marketing is based on

the exploitation of physical presence in all the streets of the world through Flagships or flagship stores. For example, the brand's store in Australia is located on one of the busiest streets in Brisbane and stands out from the rest of the buildings due to its architecture and its facade full of butterflies. The brand locates the Hong Kong Flagship, on Queen's Road, in the historic Crawford House, a unique building in the city, where large warehouses were installed in the last century. It has more than 5,000 square meters with six floors. In April 2022, the brand inaugurated the largest Zara establishment in the world, choosing the city of Madrid, capital of the country where the brand was born. It has more than 8,000 square meters located in the España building, in España Square. It is a new store paradigm. This will incorporate the latest technology: the customer will be able to locate the pieces they had saved in the web application in the physical store through a QR. It will also allow reserving the fitting room through a QR from mobile and even pay through the device. As a novelty, mirrors allow the user trying on the cosmetic products through a filter, without the need to try them on the same skin.

Methodology

This research is conceptually a case study, with qualitative techniques. It adds a quantitative analysis, based on a survey, that is, a primary source. With the survey, we collect information through the questions posed in the objectives. The processed data answer allows deducing or responding to human attitudes, behaviours or motivations related to the object of study.

The survey method uses Google Forms, disseminated through its own communication channels. It is applied to consumers in the textile sector of the Spanish market, differentiating age and gender ranges, since one of the aspects that wanted to be detected in the analysis were the various opinions regarding demographic data. It is a simple random sample.

The survey, with a $n = 74$ sample, was developed with 20 organized dichotomous questions, three of them open questions and the rest, in closed and single answer format. The order of the questions subdivides the data into four blocks: initially, relevant demographic aspects; after it, according to the purchase pattern followed by consumers, taking into account the frequency of purchase and the usual channel; third, the impression of the Zara brand by users evaluating neuromarketing strategies; and, to finish, the point of sale from the experiential perspective. This process of data collection and process was carried out during 2022-23 season.

Prior to the analysis of results and the choice of methodology to be able to choose the ideal method to address the objectives set, case study implicated a theoretical basis through several academic articles and sources of quality information.

Results

According to the surveyed sample, we extract the following information. Regarding the total sample analyzed, 76.7% were women, and 23.3% were men. In age groups, 4.2% are between 14 and 17 years old, 43.1% of the respondents are young people between 18 and 24 years old, 6.9% between 25 and 34 years old, 5.6% between 35 and 44 years old, 23.6% between 45 and 55 years old and 16.7% between 55 and 64 years old. Therefore, the most representative sample is between 18 and 24 years old. Of the total number of participants, 46.4% have a degree or a bachelor's degree and 17.8% have a high school diploma. In short, the demographic aspects of the representative sample would be young women.

In general, it is a brand frequented and recognized by the researched public. 30.3% buy there less than once a year and the other 21.9% once a year approximately. On the contrary, 20.5% usually buy there once a month or on the 16.4% once every three months. In other words, we are dealing with a diverse audience, some of which are very loyal to the brand, while others are not. Among this group of respondents who are loyal to the brand (who buys there once a month, every three months, or every six months), 94.2% are women and mostly between 18 and 24 years.

The preferred channel for consumers to buy from the brand is the physical store (Figure 1), while the website or mobile application, despite being an innovative channel and, is not yet consolidated. The majority of the public agrees with the same reason why they prefer the physical point of sale and that is to be able to try on the clothes and for the ease or comfort that this means for them. Therefore, it follows that although online sales have boomed, the population continues to consider the advantages of physical purchases and the ease of these prevails over digitization, at least in the fashion sector.

Channel of purchasing	Percentage
Physical store	87,5%
Web page	8,3%
Mobile app	4,2%

Figure 1. Preferred channel for consumers. Source: own elaboration

The perception that consumers have of Zara is of a successful brand, for almost 100% of respondents, for several reasons, but above all it is attributed to the good positioning of the brand, and the type of product; latest trend and at low prices. These characteristics refer to the concept developed by Amancio Ortega called "instant fashion", in which the brand embodied the latest trends, and this is why there is a constant rotation of clothing items

following the latest haute couture brands. In this sense, 65.3% of the sample distinguish the differentiating factor of Zara as the good relationship between quality and price and only 12.5% for the company's marketing or communication. Once again, it is evident that the brand studied does not owe its success to the marketing or advertising it has carried out, but that it is perceived as a low-cost brand, as mentioned. Beyond any feeling or emotion, the word "tendencies" is also repeated on several occasions. Despite being a brand with a very diverse target audience, only 16.9% of the sample feels identified with the brand's values, which within this same percentage, 63.63% are a young audience, under the age of 35, therefore, the target of this could be defined within this range.

From an experiential or neuromarketing point of view, 63.9% of consumers find shopping in the brand's stores a good experience. Of this public that affirms this fact, 91% answer "a lot" or "quite a lot" to the survey question of whether they like ZARA stores, through this data it can be deduced that the establishment is a direct conditioning of the product purchase experience.

In the same way, the positive options added up a lot or quite a bit added up, making up 67.1% while the negative ones, not at all or a little, the other 32, 9%. From this data, the people who assume that they shop at Zara once a year or less than once a year, which make up 50.6% of the sample, are consumers who have a negative opinion about in the brand's stores, since most answered "not at all" or "a little" to this question. On the other hand, the people who do like Zara stores are consumers who shop there once a month or every three months.

For this same reason, the fact that Flagships are elements that help shape the perception of the brand is highlighted. Likewise, 97.3% of respondents consider that the five human senses: hearing, smell, sight, touch or taste, can alter purchasing decisions. In other words, consumers are aware of the sensory factor and the relevance of neuromarketing.

On the other hand, we asked about the way in which these senses are enhanced in Zara's points of sale, encompassing aspects that affect the senses, such as brightness, the combination of colours, the smell, the treatment or the windows (Figure 2). Surprisingly, 72.2% claim that what stands out most in the brand's establishments are combination of colours and brightness, both of which refer to the sense of sight. Aesthetics of the stores is the factor that prevails for Zara consumers, more than the fragrance of the brand, which only 8.3% of the sample recognized as a factor to highlight, even though smell is one of the senses that stand out in stores and that brands tend to use it as a tool to encourage brand recall. (Figure 2)

With respect to the management and conceptualization of Flagships or how the senses are enhanced in the points of sale of other brands, there is an aspect which takes on importance, which is "how they make you feel/deal with the customer". According to the sample surveyed, it is the most important aspect to take into account in a point of sale. However, this aspect has not been distinguished in the previous explanation that refers only to the Zara brand, therefore, it can be deduced that the studied brand would not have a customer relationship that is satisfactory for consumers, as only 1.4% chose the

corresponding option. This is why, despite being a factor that the Inditex brand considers very valuable, as mentioned in the theoretical explanation, it does not reach a perspective that is pleasing to the public. Again, attributes that refer to aesthetics and the visual sense are the ones that prevail, such as brightness and color combination. Therefore, indisputably the appearance of a point of sale is the main element that shapes the perception of the brand at the point of sale and is a condition for defining the consumer's sales experience.

Element	Percentage
Combination of colours	38,9%
Brightness	33,3%
Shop window	15,3%
Fragrance	8,3%
Others (deal with the costumer, price, feelings...)	4,2%

Figure 2. Elements that help shape the perception of the brand. Source: own elaboration

Finally, about the respondents' memory of any of the brand's stores, the most repeated answers being Zara in Barcelona in Plaça Catalunya and ZARA in Madrid. Both points of sale are flagship stores that stand out for their large dimensions, located in emblematic places in the city and in architectural buildings. To put it better, from these qualitative data, stores called concept stores modify the perception of the brand and help shape its values and will obviously create a memory in the consumer's memory, and if through of this, the user has a good experience, he will associate with the brand in the same way.

Conclusion

Through this research, we observe that, increasingly, brands use the concept of experiential marketing to reach consumers. It is a new marketing model that, contrary to what is known as that traditional marketing, plays with sensory aspects of consumers such as the human senses but above all in a world of experiences. Recently, several companies have identified themselves in the stimulation of the senses to create a link between the brand and the public. That is why we wanted to analyze the case of Zara as a reference brand in the textile sector, this one, far from using traditional marketing, has focused on experiences at the point of sale, through the Flagships, as a link of more direct contact with the consumer.

The perception of Zara by consumers consists of a low-cost brand with a good relationship with the quality and price of its products. The way in which the senses improve in the brand's stores reflects the brand's use of these techniques that encompass sensory marketing. The most valued by consumers is the aesthetics of the points of sale, a fact that Zara has exploited through its Flagships. Considering the perception of the public, the point of sale has the most important role in defining the shopping experience. In this sense, the buying experience for consumers of the brand is very pleasant. Considering other relevant aspects for consumers, the smell or fragrance in the establishments is a noteworthy factor. Sight is a priority, in the line of Zamani, Abas & Amin (2016) and Hussain (2019). Despite this, the olfactory brand of Zara does not acquire as much prominence as other brands do in its points of sale.

On the other hand, customer service is not well valued by customers, despite being a very valuable element for them. However, the storefronts of the investigated brand do stand out compared to other brands, and help to develop the brand experience as well. Customer service must be improved, like Shariq (2018) and Oh et al (2019).

Regarding the public's preferred purchase channels, there is a clear trend towards physical sales, which reiterates the value of the sensory elements at the point of sale compared to Zara's digital channels, so for this brand it represents an investing in concept stores is a big bet. The general trend indicates a growth of the digital channel (Fondevila-Gascón, 2013). In addition, we show that there are no differences in the valuation of the brand according to the socio-demographic variables considered in this study: sex, age or level of education. The principal limitation is in the sample that conditions possible conclusions in these parameters.

Future research related to this research could consist of the application of neuromarketing techniques, such as the electroencephalogram, to monitor the brain and the stimuli when shopping at this company. Being able to access, this technology could be used to evaluate emotional aspects linked to the brand experience and the role of Flagships. Knowing this data would complement the aspects discussed in this research and achieve a deeper picture of the feelings and emotions associated with this brand. Comparing a physical and virtual visit can inspire new scientific approaches, from a quantitative and a qualitative point of view.

References

- Álvarez, G., Mazzitelli, A., & Tristeza, D. (2010). *El neuromarketing*. Creación y Producción en Diseño y Comunicación, 65-66.
- Arrigo, E. (2018). *The flagship stores as sustainability communication channels for luxury fashion retailers*. Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services, 44, 170-177.
- Berčič, J., Paluchová, J., Gálová, J., Neomániová, K., & Hladíková, L. (2018). *Aroma Marketing—a Modern Marketing Phenomenon*. International Scientific Days, 586-598.

- Berčík, J., Neomániová, K., Mravcová, A., & Gálová, J. (2021). *Review of the potential of consumer neuroscience for aroma marketing and its importance in various segments of services*. Applied Sciences, 11(16), 7636.
- Blazquez, M., Boardman, R., & Xu, L. (2019). *International flagship stores: an exploration of store atmospherics and their influence on purchase behaviour*. International Journal of business and Globalisation, 22(1), 110-126.
- Boukis, A., Christodoulides, G. (2020). *Investigating key antecedents and outcomes of employee-based brand equity*. European Management Review, 17(1), 41-55.
- Brakus, J. J., Schmitt, B. H., & Zarantonello, L. (2009). *Brand Experience: What Is It? How Is It Measured? Does It Affect Loyalty?* Journal of Marketing, 73(3), 52-68.
- Chunling, L. (2020). *Analysis on the Marketing Strategy of Fast Fashion Brand Zara Based on 4C Theory*. In *4th International Conference on Economics, Management Engineering and Education Technology (ICEMEET 2020)* (pp. 3-5).
- Coca Carasila, A. M. (2010). *Neuromarketing: Las emociones y el comportamiento de compra*. Perspectivas, (25), 9-24.
- Dueñas, P. P. M., & Gómez-Carmona, D. (2022). *Aplicación de las técnicas de marketing sensorial en los establecimientos de moda: el caso de Zara y Stradivarius*. Vivat Academia. Revista de Comunicación, 17-32.
- Fiorentino, M., Ricci, M., Evangelista, A., Manghisi, V. M., & Uva, A. E. (2022). *A multi-sensory in-store virtual reality customer journey for retailing: a field study in a furniture flagship store*. Future Internet, 14(12), 381.
- Fondevila-Gascón, J.-F. (2013). *Periodismo ciudadano y cloud journalism: un flujo necesario en la Sociedad de la Banda Ancha*. Comunicación y Hombre, 9, 25-41. <https://doi.org/10.32466/eufv-cyh.2013.9.163.25-41>
- Fondevila-Gascón, J.-F., Mir-Bernal, P., & Rom-Rodríguez, J. (2018). *Social media content value for a brand: study case*. Questiones publicitarias, 1(21): 21-26. <https://doi.org/10.5565/rev/qp.298>
- Fondevila-Gascón, J.-F., Mir-Bernal, P., Sanmiguel, P., Sádaba, T., & Pérez-Bou, S. (2021). *Millennials and Fashion: Branding and Positioning through Digital Interactions*. In T. Sádaba, N. Kalbaska, F. Cominelli, L. Cantoni & M. Torregrosa Puig (eds.), *Fashion Communication* (pp. 117-128). Pamplona: Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-81321-5_10
- Fondevila-Gascón, J.-F., Mir-Bernal, P., Sanmiguel, P., Sádaba-Garraza, T., & Vila-Márquez, F. (2022). *Engage employees to engage customers: The role of the internal branding in fashion in retail*. Cuadernos del Centro de Estudios en Diseño y Comunicación, 174, 93-122.
- Gómez, S., & Hernández, S. (2020). *El olfato en el marketing sensorial: estudio de caso de Zara Home*. Revista de Marketing Aplicado, 24(2), 201-216.
- Gómez Gallo, S., & Hernández Zelaya, S. L. (2020). *El olfato en el marketing sensorial: estudio de caso de Zara Home*. Redmarka. Revista de Marketing Aplicado, 24(2), 201-2016.
- Gómez Nieto, B. & Tapia Frade, A. (2012). *Flagship, nuevos enfoques para la imagen corporativa de las empresas: el caso Telefónica*. Razón y palabra, 81.
- Hussain, S. (2019). *Sensory Marketing Strategies and Consumer Behavior: Sensible Selling Using All Five Senses*. IUP Journal of Business Strategy, 16(3).

- Inditex (2023). *Inditex en el mundo*. La Coruña: Inditex.
- Interbrand (2020). *Zara, Bershka y Mayoral, las marcas más fuertes de la moda española*. The Brand Consulting Group of Omnicom Group Inc.
- Izquierdo, V., Ayestarán Crespo, R., García Guardia, M. L. (2018). *La experiencia de cliente de las marcas de moda de lujo en las flagship y los corners*. Prisma Social: revista de investigación social, 23, 416-434.
- Jahn, S., Nierobisch, T., Toporowski, W., & Dannewald, T. (2018). *Selling the extraordinary in experiential retail stores*. *Journal of the Association for Consumer Research*, 3(3), 412-424.
- Jin, S. A. A. (2011). *The impact of 3d virtual haptics in marketing*. *Psychology & Marketing*, 28(3), 240-255.
- Kantar Media (2023). *Customer Experience*. Sant Cugat del Vallès: Kantar.
- Luangrath, A. W., Peck, J., Hedgcock, W., & Xu, Y. (2022). *Observing product touch: The vicarious haptic effect in digital marketing and virtual reality*. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 59(2), 306-326.
- Marín P. P., Gómez C. D. (2022). Aplicación de las técnicas de marketing sensorial en los establecimientos de moda: el caso de Zara y Stradivarius. *Vivat Academia. Revista de Comunicación*, 155, 17-32.
- Martínez Navarro, G. (2016). El retail experiencial: un nuevo enfoque en la comunicación de marca. In M E. Camarero Calandria & J. Rodríguez Terceño, *Estrategias en comunicación y su evolución en los discursos* (pp. 463-478). Madrid: McGraw-Hill Interamericana de España.
- Mendoza Vargas, E., Boza Valle, J. Escobar Terán, H., Macías España, G. (2019). El Neuro-marketing y las emociones, factor de éxito en la construcción de marcas en los emprendimientos. *Revista Cumbres*, 5(1), 69-81.
- Moore, C. M., Doherty, A. M., & Doyle, S. A. (2010). *Flagship stores as a market entry method: the perspective of luxury fashion retailing*. *European Journal of Marketing*, 44(1/2), 139-161.
- Moral, M., Fernández, M. (2012). Nuevas tendencias del marketing: el marketing experiencial. *Revista Entelequia*, 14(237), 237-251.
- Nierobisch, T., Toporowski, W., Dannewald, T., & Jahn, S. (2017). Flagship stores for FMCG national brands: Do they improve brand cognitions and create favorable consumer reactions? *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 34, 117-137.
- Ogden, J. R., Ogden, D. T., & Long, K. (2011). *Music marketing: A history and landscape*. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 18(2), 120-125.
- Oh, H., Prado, P. H. M., Korelo, J. C., & Frizzo, F. (2019). The effect of brand authenticity on consumer-brand relationships. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 28(2), 231-241.
- Popović-Šević, N., Jeremić, A., Slijepčević, M., & Ilić, M. (2021). *Marketing focused on the online brand community: The example of Zara*. *Marketing*, 52(1), 32-42.
- Ranaweera, A. T., Martin, B. A., & Jin, H. S. (2021). *What you touch, touches you: The influence of haptic attributes on consumer product impressions*. *Psychology & Marketing*, 38(1), 183-195.
- Schmitt, B. H. (2000). *Experiential Marketing: How to Get Customers to Sense, Feel, Think, Act, and Relate to Your Company and Brands*. New York: Free Press.

- Shariq, M. (2018). *Brand equity dimensions-a literature review*. International Research Journal of Management and Commerce, 5(3), 312.
- Suresh, R., Kumar, S., Singh, V., Pravesh, R., Tomar, V. K. S., & Singh, A. K. (2012). *Economics of production to marketing of aromatic crops in Uttar Pradesh: A case study*. Agricultural Economics Research Review, 25, 157-160.
- Wheeler, A. (2018). *Diseño de marcas*. Madrid: Anaya Multimedia.
- Zamani, H., Abas, A., & Amin, M. K. M. (2016). *Eye tracking application on emotion analysis for marketing strategy*. Journal of Telecommunication, Electronic and Computer Engineering (JTEC), 8(11), 87-91.
-

Resumen: La percepción de marca y su aplicación en el punto de venta son objetos de estudio innovadores. La relación entre ellos y sus posibles efectos son un foco de monetización y desempeño en el contexto de la Sociedad de Banda Ancha. La conocida marca Zara encabeza el récord de ventas de la multinacional Inditex. Esta marca produce el 70% de las ventas de todo el grupo. Lejos de echar mano del marketing tradicional, Zara resulta ser una marca experta en la aplicación de técnicas sensoriales, a través de los sentidos, y en crear una experiencia para los consumidores, como impulso de compra y sobre todo tratando al consumidor como un sujeto emocional, conectando el consumidor con la marca y fomentando un vínculo emocional.

Estos aspectos se reflejan en los puntos de venta de la marca, especialmente en las denominadas Flagships o concept store. La metodología es un estudio de caso, mediante una técnica cuantitativa, mediante una encuesta. Analizamos las tiendas Flagship de la marca, como punto de contacto directo con el consumidor, intentando comprender la relación entre la percepción y la de la marca por parte del público, respecto a estas tiendas icónicas. Concluimos que los principales elementos que ayudan a moldear la percepción de la marca en las tiendas Flagship son la combinación de colores, brillo, escaparate y fragancia.

Palabras clave: Marketing sensorial - buque insignia - percepción - experiencia - sentidos - neuromarketing - colores - escaparate - marca - técnica.

Resumo: A percepção da marca e sua aplicação no ponto de venda são objetos de estudo inovadores. A relação entre eles e os possíveis efeitos são foco de monetização e atuação no contexto da Sociedade de Banda Larga. A conhecida marca Zara lidera o recorde de vendas da multinacional Inditex. Esta marca produz 70% das vendas de todo o grupo. Longe de recorrer ao marketing tradicional, a Zara revela-se uma marca especialista na aplicação de técnicas sensoriais, através dos sentidos, e em criar uma experiência para os consumidores, como impulso de compra e principalmente tratar o consumidor como um sujeito emocional, conectando o consumidor com a marca e promovendo um vínculo

emocional. Estes aspectos refletem-se nos pontos de venda da marca, sobretudo nas chamadas Flagships ou lojas conceito. A metodologia é um estudo de caso, utilizando técnica quantitativa, por meio de questionário. Analisamos as lojas Flagship da marca, como ponto de contacto direto com o consumidor, procurando compreender a relação entre a percepção e a percepção da marca por parte do público, no que diz respeito a estas lojas icônicas. Concluimos que os principais elementos que ajudam a moldar a percepção da marca nas lojas Flagships são a combinação de cores, brilho, vitrine e fragrância.

Palavras-chave: Marketing sensorial - carro-chefe - percepção - experiência - sentidos - neuromarketing - cores - vitrine - marca - técnica.

[Las traducciones de los abstracts fueron supervisadas por el autor de cada artículo.]
