

SENSORY MARKETING ACCORDING TO SHOPPING CENTRE CUSTOMERS

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Abstract: Sensory marketing is one of the forms of marketing communication and a method of customer attachment to the brand. It is based on influencing the customer's senses, which is supposed to affect their sensory experience and, as a result, positive recollection of the product's brand. The aim of the study was to find out the opinions of shopping mall customers on sensory marketing activities. Two studies were conducted: a survey and an observation study. Both surveys involved young people: customers of shopping malls. It has been shown that young customers are knowledgeable about sensory marketing but often do not notice how it works at purchasing points. The respondents concluded that, in such a situation, sensory stimuli influence the choice of product, but not necessarily people's attachment to the brand. The stimuli used in audio and aroma marketing have a positive impact on customers but sometimes they are also perceived negatively. The research shows that you need to monitor your target customer groups and adjust sensory stimuli to their tastes. It may be used by organisations for product management and marketing planning purposes.

Keywords: young consumer, aromamarketing, audiomarketing, visual marketing, consumer behaviour.

1. INTRODUCTION

One of the types of marketing practised in recent years is sensory marketing, the aim of which is to influence the customer's senses and, as a result, evoke associations of specific stimuli with a given product or brand [Hultén, Broweus and Van Dijk 2011]. It is a form of marketing communication as sensory marketing activities carry specific information about the product and its brand. For this purpose, sensory marketing, called 5D marketing, uses stimuli that act on the five senses: sight (visual marketing), hearing (audio marketing), smell (aromamarketing), touch and taste (flavour marketing) [Lindstrom 2009; Krishna 2010]. These issues have been discussed in detail in numerous scientific publications [Hultén, Broweus and Van

Dijk 2011; Johann 2011; Dissabandara and Dissanayake 2019; Lenart 2019; Staniszewska 2021], including Rybowska's earlier publications [Rybowska 2014; 2016].

Sensory marketing is supposed to expand and intensify the customer's sensory experiences associated with the product and evoke positive emotions in them and, as a result, persuade them to buy the product and attach them to the brand [Sadowska 2010; Pabian 2019; Staniszewska 2022].

Research shows that such activities result in longer stay in the retail outlet and encourage customers to purchase the product [Schmidt and Rogers 2008; Dahlen, Lange and Smith 2010; Kolasińska-Morawska 2012; Rodas-Areiza and Montoya-Restrepo 2018]. They also affect customer loyalty [Staniszewska 2021; Shahid et al. 2022].

These activities are carried out in three stages [Pecyna, Stoma and Piekarski 2015]:

- Stage I – stimulation;
- Stage II – strengthening;
- Stage III – creating bonds.

Each of the above stages must be foreseen and properly planned when formulating brand marketing activities and product management strategies.

The importance of sensory marketing is growing and it is increasingly used in organisations as one of the elements of the holistic image of the organisation [Farhadi, Eslambolchi and Hamedani 2017]. It is often used in various types of services, especially in the catering and hotel industry, as well as in trade [Kuczamer-Kłopotowska 2017; Włodarczyk 2018]. Despite this, the activities involved in this kind of marketing are not always noticed or appreciated by consumers. As a result, it is necessary to monitor them in order to introduce changes that make them more effective, taking into account the different groups of customers subjected to such marketing activities.

The aim of the study was to find out the opinions of shopping mall customers on sensory marketing activities.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Two studies were conducted to find out the opinions of customers of Tri-City shopping malls on sensory marketing and its impact on their feelings and emotions.

The first one was conducted in December 2022. The aim of the study was to find out the opinions of young consumers (19–25 years old) on sensory marketing. This study was carried out using the CAWI survey method. The survey questionnaire consisted of 10 questions focusing on opinions about sensory marketing, its concept and impact on the customer. Different types of questions were used: single- and multiple-choice closed-ended questions, open-ended questions, alternative

various elements of sensory marketing on the well-being of customers. An observation-based method was used. The study involved 40 people, including 25 women (62.5%) and 15 men (37.5%) aged 19–25, who stayed in shopping malls and agreed to participate in the study (random selection). These people were asked to visit selected stores and evaluate the indicated elements of sensory marketing used in them. After leaving the retail outlet, each of the respondents completed a questionnaire prepared for this purpose and validated, in which they were asked about the well-being of the respondents on a given day. Next, they were asked to rate the smell, music and colours in each retail outlet visited. Single-choice questions were used, which made it possible to indicate only one feeling, the most important one experienced in a given restaurant. The results of the studies are presented as a percentage of responses.

3. RESULTS OF OWN RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION

At the beginning, respondents were asked how often they visited shopping centres. It emerged that young consumers did this most often: almost half of them do it several times a month (49%), while almost a third of them visit shops once a month (29.5%). 13.7% of them do it once a week, 4.9% several times a week and the rest less than once a month. There was no difference in the responses of men and women (Fig. 1).

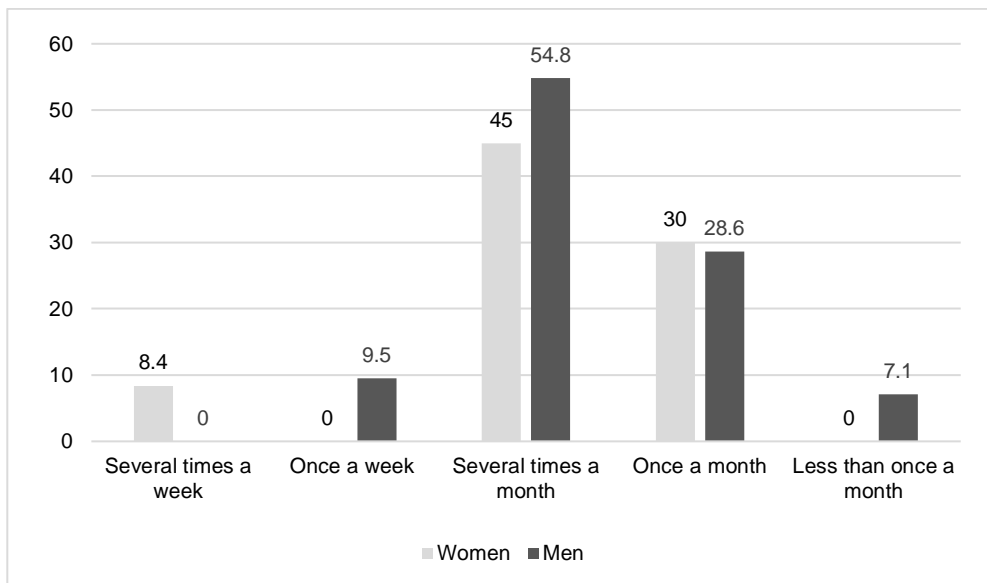


Fig. 1. Frequency of visits to retail outlets by gender [%]

Source: own research.

More women than men visit shopping centres once a week and several times a week. Galleries are visited more often by urban dwellers than by rural residents, who do so once a month (76%) or less than once a month (12%), while the rest do it once a week and several times a month (6% each) (Fig. 2).

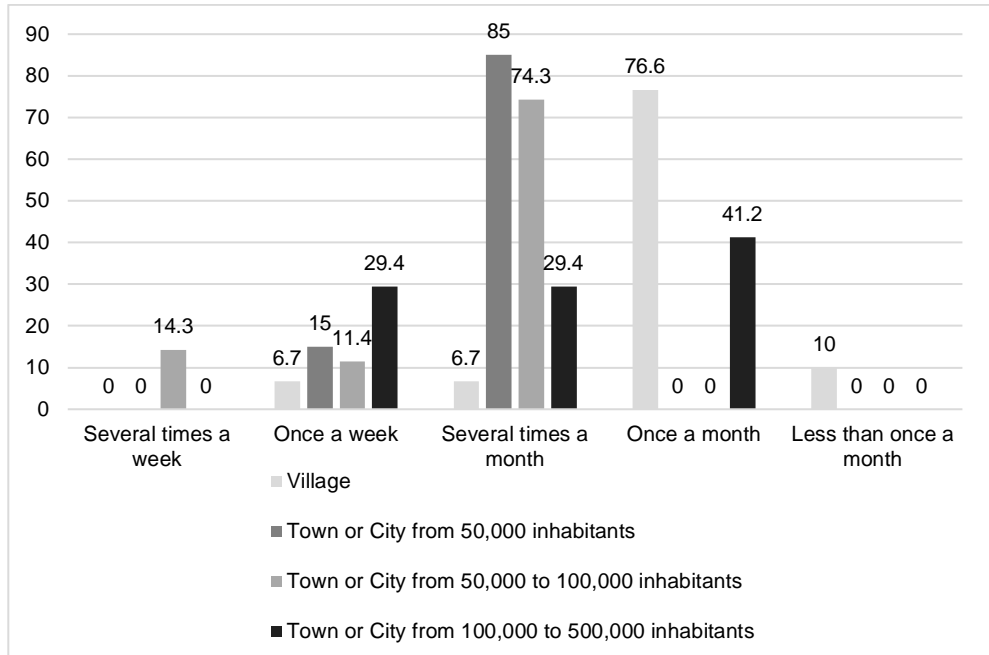


Fig. 2. Frequency of visits to retail establishments by place of residence [%]

Source: own research.

In the next question, respondents were asked if they were familiar with the concept of sensory marketing. Rybowska's research from 2014 showed that only 50% of adult respondents were familiar with this concept, and in the 2022 Sowiek-Kasprzyk study, only 57% of them were familiar with it [Rybowska 2014; Sowiek-Kasprzyk 2022]. A similarly low level of awareness of the concept was found in 2016 among young people. It was declared by 30% of the young women and only 18% of men surveyed, and more often than not, they were people from the city [Rybowska 2016]. Nowadays, this situation has changed in this group of respondents. In a survey conducted among young customers, this percentage was higher. Most of them (83%) were familiar with the concept and considered it to be a marketing activity aimed at evoking associations and reactions in the consumer by influencing the senses. Others stated that it is an approach to the tastes and preferences of each individual customer, which is not in line with the accepted definition of the term in question. Sensory marketing was more often correctly

defined by women than by men, who more often defined it as an approach to the tastes and preferences of each individual customer (36.2% of responses in this group). The term was more well-known among the inhabitants of large cities (94.3% and 88.2% of correct responses) than among the inhabitants of small towns (75%) and rural areas (65%), but it was mostly correctly defined. The others indicated the other response. At the same time, just over 93% of respondents noticed sensory marketing activities in the stores they visited. The remaining less than 7% of the respondents were mostly men (12% men) and residents of small towns and villages. Respondents most often noticed sensory marketing activities in stores offering products from the following industries: cosmetics (94.7%), food (93.7%), clothing (87.4%) and catering (73.7%), and, albeit very rarely, in the hotel industry (4.2%). By contrast, no one indicated the household appliances/electronics industry (Fig. 3).

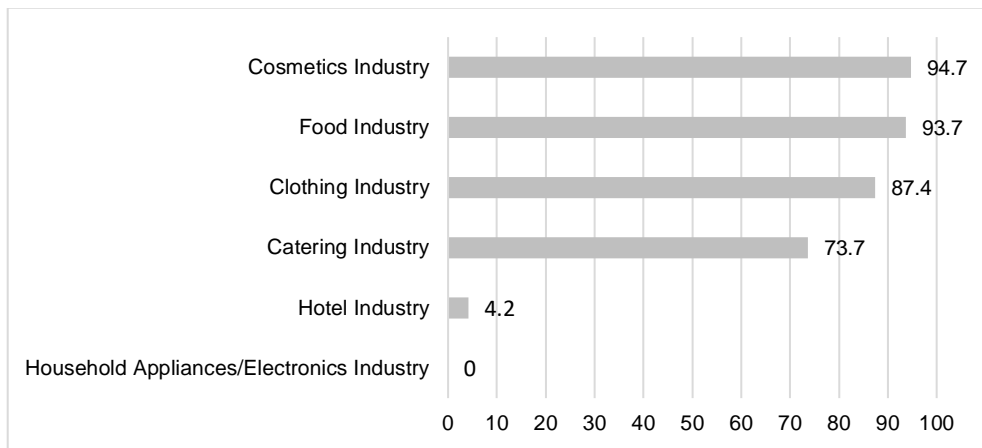


Fig. 3. Areas of impact of sensory marketing according to all respondents [%]

Source: own research.

In a 2016 survey, respondents most often saw sensory marketing in the clothing industry, as indicated by 56% of women and 27% of men. The latter also indicated the household appliances/electronics industry (34%) and the food industry (6%). Women were more likely to see such activities in the food and cosmetics industries (20% and 14%, respectively). Such activities were also observed in catering establishments (restaurants and cafes (12% of responses)) [Rybowska 2016]. A comparison of the results from the two periods indicates that customers will pay attention to sensory marketing activities in other industries.

Respondents were asked what senses influenced their choice of products from different industries. The respondents concluded that the most important thing when choosing food products was the sense of taste, followed by smell, touch and finally sight.

When it comes to choosing products from the household appliances/electronics industry, the respondents considered the senses of sight, touch and hearing to be the most important. The sense of sight and touch were important when choosing clothing and cosmetics, with the sense of smell being the most important in the latter (Tab. 2).

Table 2. The importance of individual senses in the selection of products from different industries (\bar{x})

Sense	Food	Household Appliances	Cosmetics	Clothing
Sight (Appearance)	1.9	4.5	3.9	4.6
Touch	2.6	3.9	3.1	3.4
Smell (Fragrance)	3.9	-	4.8	-
Taste	4.8	-	-	-
Hearing (Sound)	-	3.6	-	-

Source: own research.

Similar results were obtained by Grzybowska-Brzezińska and Rudzewicz [2013], in which respondents stated that when choosing products from different product groups, sight was the most important (food products, clothing, cosmetics, household appliances), followed by taste, smell and touch (in food products), and smell or touch in the others.

The respondents were asked what factors determine whether they will return to a given trading business. The results of the survey show that the most important factors for respondents are promotions ($\bar{x} = 4,8$) and quality of service ($\bar{x} = 4,6$). This is followed by factors that affect consumers' senses: store décor, pleasant smell, music and colours. The respondents were asked what factors determine whether they will return to a given trading business.

The results of the survey show that the most important factors for respondents are promotions and the quality of service. Lighting in retail outlets is one of the factors that respondents pay attention to, but it is less important than all other factors (Fig. 4). There were no differences in the opinions of women and men.

However, men rated the importance of music in retail outlets higher than women as a factor that could influence repeat visits.

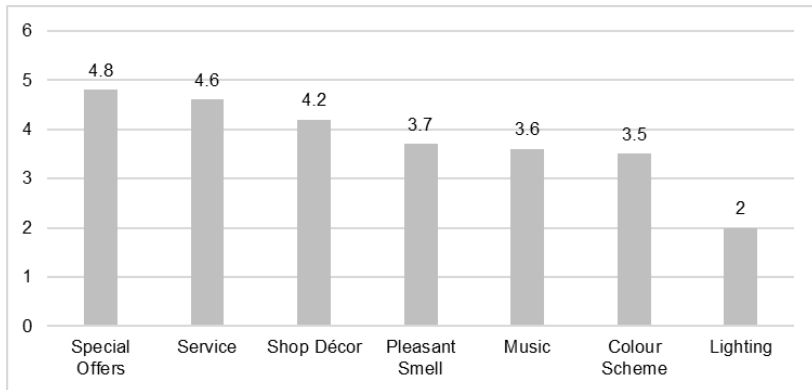


Fig. 4. Factors influencing repeat visits to the facility according to the total number of respondents (\bar{x})

Source: own research.

The place of residence of the respondents differed their opinions on this issue, which is illustrated in Figure 5. For all the respondents, regardless of where they lived, special offers and service were important.

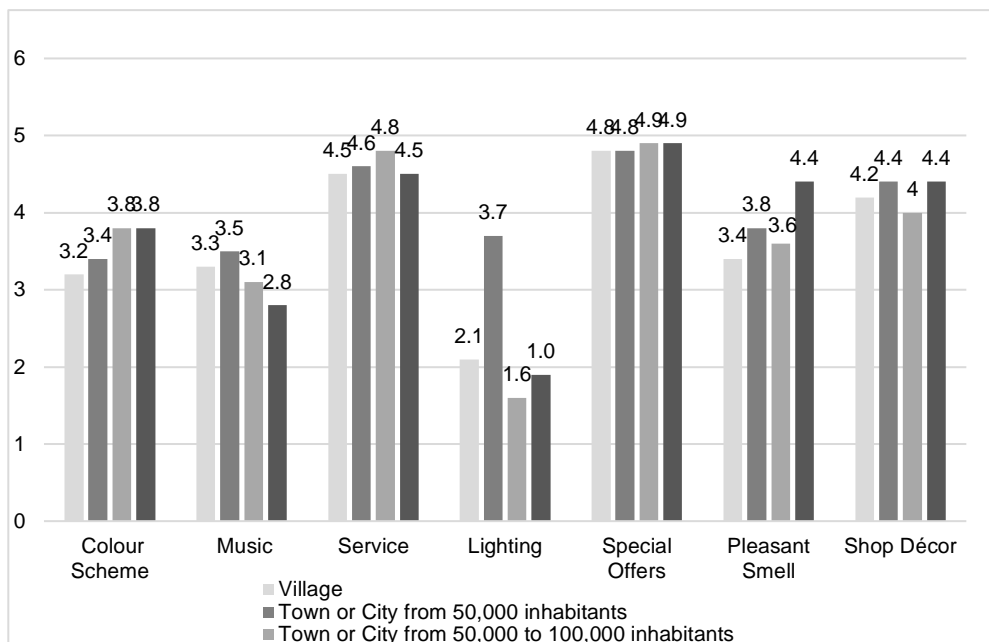


Fig. 5. The influence of factors on the return of visits to the facility according to respondents, depending on where they live (\bar{x})

Source: own research.

However, the weight of the other factors varied. For residents of larger towns, sensory factors were less important than for consumers from smaller towns. The exception was the colour scheme used in the facility, which was more important for young people from larger towns.

When asked to listen to selected songs representing various musical styles, the respondents said that pop music (91.3% of responses) and relaxing music (8.7%) suited them best. Melodies described as feminine and sad were not taken into account. Pop music was indicated by all men surveyed, while women's opinions were more divided: 72% of them indicated pop music, while the rest of them indicated relaxing music. Pop music was preferred by residents of smaller towns and villages, while those from larger towns had divided opinions, and it was in these groups that relaxing music was appreciated (8.6% and 24.4%, respectively). Respondents in the study by Zielińska and Koy [2017] strongly agreed (28%) or were inclined to agree (49%) that in-store music contributes to building brand loyalty.

An analysis of the photos presented in the questionnaire showing the interiors of stores with different colours was aimed at showing the influence of colours on the customer's feelings in retail outlets. Respondents stated that in bright rooms (white and blue) they most often felt calm, in red stores they feel mainly anxious or full of energy, and only a small part of the respondents feel calm in such places (Fig. 6).

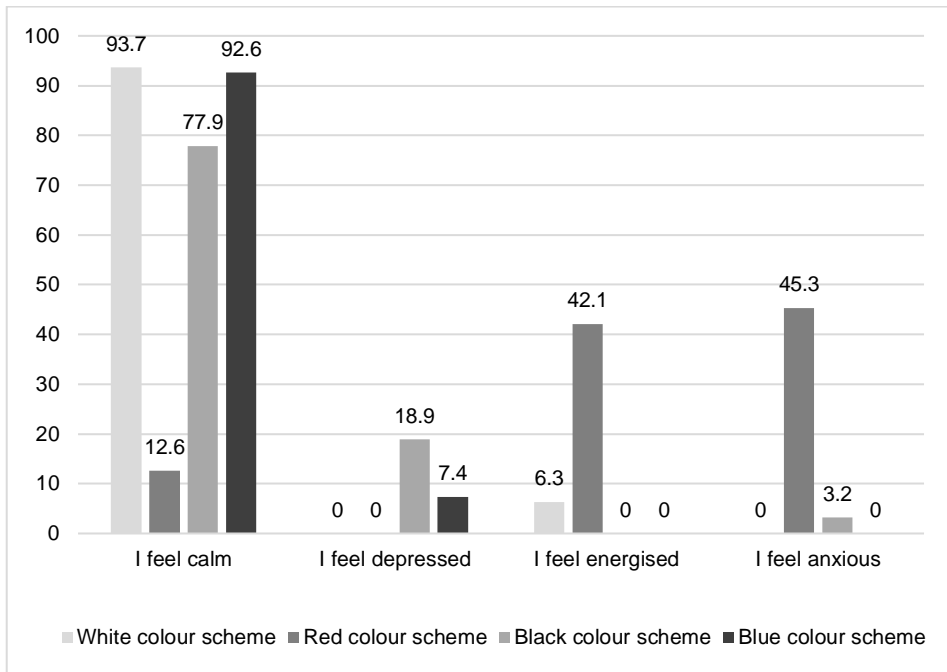


Fig. 6. The impact of the store's colour scheme on well-being according to all respondents [%]

Source: own research.

Urban respondents felt energised in white-coloured retail outlets. One in three men surveyed felt calm in red-tinged shops, while the vast majority of women felt anxious in such places. The dark colour scheme of a store's interior made most respondents living in rural areas and cities with up to 50,000 inhabitants feel calm there, while a small number of respondents living in cities with more than 50,000 inhabitants felt depressed. A significant correlation was found between the declared favourite colour and the effect on well-being in dark-coloured stores. Each of the surveyed people whose favourite colour was black felt calm in interiors this colour. The same situation can be seen in retail establishments with blue interiors (Tab. 3).

Respondents believed that a positive sensory experience in retail outlets affected the level of customer attachment to certain brands. 18.7% and 48.8% of respondents agreed with this opinion respectively. Just over 29% of respondents had no opinion on the matter, and the rest disagreed. None of the respondents claimed that the sensory experience definitely did not bind the consumer to the brand.

One in four women said that sensory experiences definitely affected the level of brand loyalty. Most of the men surveyed believed that it was brand attachment that created a positive impact on the human senses (60.5%) (Fig. 7).

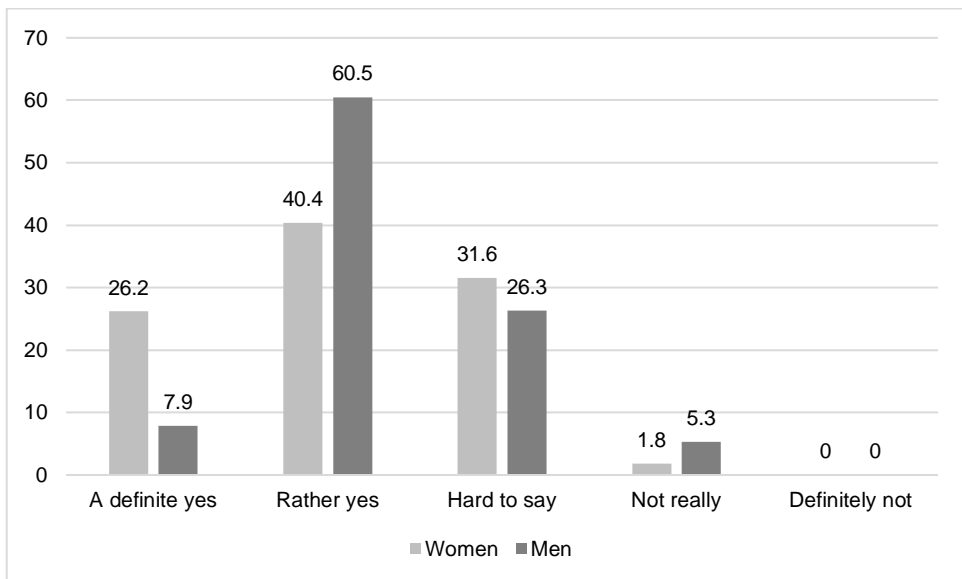


Fig. 7. Impact of positive sensory experiences on brand loyalty by gender [%]

Source: own research.

This issue differentiated the opinions of the inhabitants of cities and villages. The latter, in contrast to city dwellers, were not really convinced that sensory experiences at the places where they bought a particular product affected brand loyalty, and some of them (11.5%) disagreed with this statement (Fig. 8).



Fig. 8. Impact of positive sensory experiences on brand loyalty by place of residence [%]

Source: own research.

Sowier-Kasprzyk [2022] has shown that sensory stimuli in retail outlets have a greater impact on customers' purchasing decisions than their brand loyalty. However, when analysing the latter aspect, the greatest role was played by visual stimuli such as smell, taste, touch and sound.

Due to the fact that shopping mall customers did not always pay attention to the operation of individual elements of sensory marketing, an observational survey was carried out after the end of the survey. At the beginning, participants were asked to rate how they felt on a given day. In the group of customers surveyed, 45% of the respondents declared that they felt tired, 37% said that they felt happy, and the rest stated that they felt rested. None of the subjects were sad or angry (upset). The respondents visited four selected stores of well-known chains in shopping malls, and after leaving they assessed the elements of sensory marketing used in them.

In stores visited by the group of customers surveyed, audio marketing was used and various types of melodies were used (there was no sound marketing in the jewellery shop). Relaxing music was played at the chemist's, and pop music was played in the other two shops. Music influenced the way customers felt, although

many respondents did not pay any attention to it, especially in the shoe store and chemist's (55% and 36%, respectively) (Tab. 4). Many customers also indicated that the music did not bother them while they were in the store. However, there were those who were irritated by music, as indicated by 25% of people visiting the chemist's, 14% of shoe shop customers and 5% of clothes shop customers. On the other hand, 32% of the surveyed customers in a clothing store and for 24% said music gave them more energy. Some of the respondents also said that they experienced the relaxing effects of music.

Table 4. Impact of music in the selected store on customer well-being [%]

Opinion	Jewellery shop	Chemist's	Shoe shop	Clothes shop
I feel calm	-	-	10	22
It gives me more energy	-	24	-	32
It irritates me	-	25	14	5
It relaxes me	-	-	-	11
It doesn't bother me	-	15	21	23
I didn't pay any attention to it	-	36	55	7

Source: own research.

Aromamarketing was used in selected stores and a different type of fragrance was used in each of them. Only at the chemist's was there no smell marketing. Table 5 shows how customers feel when they leave a retail outlet. Most of the respondents said that the smell was pleasant, but also had an energising effect and stimulated the senses (especially in a clothes shop). In a jewellery shop, the smell had a calming effect, which could have a positive effect on the customer by relaxing them and keeping them longer in a room where there were many stimuli. However, some clothes shop (20%) and shoe shop (15%) customers, plus 8% of jewellery shop customers felt that the smell was too intense.

Table 5. Impact of the smell of a selected store on the well-being of customers [%]

Opinion	Jewellery shop	Chemist's	Shoe shop	Clothes shop
Irritating	-	-	-	-
It gives me more energy	11	-	10	11
It calms me down	21	-	8	-
It's pleasant	56	-	49	54
It arouses my senses	4	-	11	15
Too intense	8	-	15	20
It doesn't bother me	-	-	7	-

Source: own research.

Each selected store in shopping malls had white walls, but its overall colour scheme was determined by the interior furnishings, the way the products were displayed and the lighting. The general colour scheme used in individual retail outlets evoked various feelings (Tab. 6). Most of the respondents claimed that the colour scheme of the shops did not bother them or it calmed them down. However, a large percentage of the respondents indicated that it made them feel depressed. The colours of jewellery and clothes shops cheered customers up, although there were also people who were annoyed by the colours used in the former. Colours of the shoe shop, shoe shop and clothes shop stimulated some of the respondents.

Table 6. The impact of colours in the selected store on the well-being of customers [%]

Opinia	Jewellery shop	Chemist's	Shoe shop	Clothes shop
I feel annoyed	6	-	-	-
I feel anxious	-	4	6	9
It stimulates me	-	5	13	15
It makes me feel depressed	9	18	9	-
It cheers me up	24	-	-	11
It calms me down	26	32	22	25
It doesn't bother me	35	41	50	40

Source: own research.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The results of the research show that knowledge of sensory marketing is increasing among young customers of shopping centres. A large percentage of respondents are familiar with the concept of sensory marketing and are able to define it correctly. The level of awareness is much higher in the group of young women than in the group of men. This is a significant change from the results obtained in a similar study almost 10 years ago. Despite this, the majority of respondents do not notice these activities when shopping at these purchasing outlets. Respondents acknowledged that sensory stimuli influenced product choice and, albeit to a lesser extent, could also influence customer brand loyalty. Men were more likely to agree with the latter statement, and they also indicated that the main reason for customer retention was music. Bright colours, pop and relaxing music (depending on the industry) as well as pleasant, energising and sensual scents were preferred in shops. On the other hand, some people felt that the aromamarketing used too many stimuli, which gave them unpleasant sensations. Music also had various effects on respondents; it had a positive effect on some of them but there were also those who were irritated by it.

The research shows that in order to attract the customer to the brand, it is necessary to adopt a new approach to sensory marketing activities and carefully

select stimuli for the target group of potential customers. They must be properly intensified so that they have a positive effect on the senses of customers and do not give them unpleasant sensations. This requires market monitoring, customer preference for sensory stimuli and their acceptance. This is a challenge for organisational entities wishing to develop a product management strategy and plan marketing activities.

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