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THE EFFECTS OF SENSORY STIMULI ON THE PURCHASE OF ONLINE LUXURY PRODUCT

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Traditionally, consumer shopping behavior may be influenced by the combination of five senses: vision, hearing, scent, tactility, and taste. Most of researchers nowadays, however, think that only visual and aural senses can be manipulated as stimuli in the e-commerce setting. Considering that few papers have focused on the relationship between stimuli and response (purchase) of online luxury products, this study intends to investigate the relationship between sensory atmosphere in the store and consumer's purchase response. Seeing what kind of stimuli is essential to the online luxury brand, and how the emotion aroused by these stimuli affect the purchase responses.

Literature Review: In literature review, there are two main research streams. The first stream is about online luxury product sales. According to McKinesy's report, online luxury product sales are growing twice as fast as the overall market [1]. Therefore, how to make their websites and Apps more attractive to consumers and regard them as resources to inform consumers are important to luxury retailers nowadays. The second stream is about the five sensory stimuli. Parson [2] found that aural and visual senses are most applicable to the online environment because the other sensory stimuli are difficult to generate on online shopping environment. In spite of that, some researchers pointed out that scent, tactile, and taste stimuli can be generated through images, video, and sound. They confirmed that these three senses still have impact on consumers' purchase responses on online shopping. This paper intends to fill this gap by investigating the relationship between all five senses and consumer purchase response at the same time.

Research Framework: According to the Stimulus-organism-response (S-O-R) theory [3], internal states of human being would be evoked by the environment, and also influence one's behaviors. Based on the S-O-R model, we developed a research model which contains five sensory stimuli, assuming that consumers' emotion would be affected by these stimuli on the website, and generate different purchase responses to online luxury products.

Research Method: The research conducted in this paper empirically investigated the preference for stimulus levels and likely responses when consumers are surfing luxury websites. We recruited 300 samples (150 males and 150 females) of economically-affordable adults and presented them with a scenario of shopping on online luxury store, and asked them to score each sensory level they would like with a 5 point Likert scale in the questionnaire as well as they likely purchase responses.

Expected Contribution: The current study confirmed the stimulus-organism-response relationship by showing that product presentation (online stimuli) affected emotion towards the site (emotional/cognitive states) and consequently influences purchase intent (response). Thus, this study provides practical and useful information to web site designers and online retailers by indicating that how web site atmospherics lead to positive consumer shopping outcomes.

Keywords: Consumer behavior, sensory stimuli, luxury product, e-commerce.