

## Fending Competition through Sensory Experiences- Easy Day Way

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### ABSTRACT

*Easy day has become an easy to remember name among organised retailers, as one-stop shop catering to day-to-day needs of every family. With the fast-growing organised retail sector, competition is also bound to increase exponentially. In order to stand apart from their competitors, Easy day needs to focus on sensory appeal. This includes the visual aspects of its logo with striking colours, the aural aspects with the constantly playing music and the smell of fresh fruits & vegetables in its aisles which add to the multi-sensory environment. This creative positioning will provide a unique environment for customers and challenge the competitors.*

**Keywords:** Easy day organised retail, sensory marketing, strategies, opportunities.

### I INTRODUCTION

(a) **Theoretical Background of Sensory Perspective-** Sensory marketing is defined as “marketing techniques that aim to seduce the consumer by using his senses to influence his feelings and behaviour” by American Marketing Association. A prominent author in this field, Krishna (2012) gave the definition of sensory marketing as “marketing that engages the consumers’ senses and affects their perception, judgment and behaviour”. In order to get a grip on sensory marketing, first an understanding of senses is required. The Oxford English Dictionary defines sense as “a faculty by which the body perceives an external stimulus; it may be any one of the faculties of sight, smell, hearing, taste and touch”. The rise of sensory perception started from curiosity regarding illusions that began from primitive philosophy to current field of neuroscience. Senses help people in perceiving the world but the representations they construct from the inputs received through their senses are not certainly valid reflections of properties of stimulus. In retail settings the impact of environmental stimuli found its origin in Kotler’s (1973-74) work on “atmospherics” and led to the introduction of the view that retail environments create atmospheres that have an influence on shopping behaviour. Later on, many researchers have used different environmental factors (such as crowding, music, colour and olfactory cues) for the creation of said atmospheres and research has been guided primarily on the lines of environmental psychology. To study the behavioural intentions of consumers, Donovan and Rossiter (1982) adapted Pleasure-Arousal-Dominance (PAD) framework developed by Mehrabian and Russell for retail environments. The PAD model continues to be customarily used in marketing for capturing various emotions experienced by

shoppers (Milliman, 1986; Morrin and Ratneshwar, 2000; Kang et al. 2011). Later many authors described the various effects of the five senses on consumer behaviour with most of the studies focusing on individual senses like the presence of color (Crowley, 1993), music (Herrington, 1996), smell (Bone and Ellen, 1999) and touch (Peck and Childers, 2003). These studies were conducted on customers at various service locations like malls, restaurants, retail outlets etc. Afterwards researchers started to focus on the presence of more than one environmental cue and the congruity of these cues. For example, music and smell (Spangenberg et al., 2005), smell and touch (Krishna et al., 2010), touch and vision (Balaji et al., 2011) which gave way to multisensory marketing. In a very recent study it was found that the effects of multi-sensory environment on purchase behaviour and emotions of shoppers were monumental (Helmefalk and Hulten, 2017). The results of the study revealed that designing a visually dominant store in line with a multi-sensory environment would offer more appealing experiences to the customers. Previous research scholars have shown that shopping behaviours are significantly related to emotional states, time spent in the store, intentions to make impulse purchase and satisfaction with the experience. Therefore, a look into the sensory experience in organised retail will depict its importance.

(b) **Sensory Experience in Organised Retail-** Several changes in the retail industry have been brought about by organised retail. A lot of scrutiny is paid to how the customer is treated and how he/she ‘feels’. Stressing on retail design, the consumer’s experience in a store, the look and feel of a store are few illustrations of the modifications that have come about in modern retail. Visual designers started influencing the purchase decisions of a consumer after they came to realise the role that a store

design plays in manipulating the feelings of consumers. So, nowadays they work to the smallest detail on how the store looks and feels (Indian Retailer Bureau, n.d.). A retailer cannot ignore the fact that more than sixty per cent of the purchase decisions are taken on the premises of the retail outlet. The decisions taken "in-store" for purchasing a product depend on a lot of factors like pricing, durability and the quality of the product and so on. But the factors influencing do not end at this point, aspects like the colour-scheme chosen for the walls, whether the ambience is pleasant or not, how does it smell, the type of music playing in the store, whether the in-store advertisements are properly put, how the merchandise is placed are critical and should be taken care of by visual merchandiser. A retailer can earn a lot of profit by enhancing the experience of shoppers by indulging all their senses when they are inside a store (Indian Retailer Bureau, n.d.).

## II COMPONENTS OF SENSORY PERCEPTION

- (a) **Experience matters-** The Unique Selling Point of a brand besides the quality of its product should be the 'experience' given by the brand to its consumers in the retail store. A great experience can be said to be the one which is sensory and involves all the five senses i.e. sight, smell, sound, touch and taste. According to certain designers' viewpoint, retailers can attract the clients by trying to include all the senses. The emotional encounter of a customer should move from the stage of attraction to interest, then desire, action and ultimately to satisfaction at having garnered the best that the retailers have to offer their clients. A retail outlet should always be perceived as a catalyst for increasing revenues for the retailer. Therefore, the importance of layout can never be neglected (Indian Retailer Bureau, n.d.). The 'looks' of the store is the primary factor that motivates a consumer to walk into a store. A friendly and welcoming store is always advantageous over those which are not. In-store advertisements, well-placed merchandise and bright colours, all work for creating visual appeal for a consumer. For instance, in a furniture store, helpful tips and information by interior designers can be put up next to merchandise to aid the consumers. The consumers can read, see and take informed decisions. Secondly, indulging the sense of sound through pleasing music (in accordance with the brand and merchandise concept) is a must. According to the type of customers visiting the stores, the music must be suitable. For example, at an apparel store for young adults,
- tips by stylists and fashion shows on screens can be aired in the store to succour shoppers in selecting clothes for themselves. In order to guide the customers regarding the kind of book they should pick up, bookstores can play quotes or interviews by famous authors. Third, a pleasing scent at all times adds to the ambience of a retail outlet. Strong paint fumes and repelling odours can act as a deterrent for customers. The sense of smell of a shopper should always be kept in mind by a visual merchandiser while working in accordance to the retailer's details; as bad odour is just unacceptable. A good odour is definitely a bonus to the store as it may not be always remembered, but its absence will surely be remembered. The sense of touch is a tricky sense to indulge in, but most vital. It is more than a necessity to be able to 'feel' the merchandise for today's quality-conscious consumer. Some customers have an inherent urge to touch products before buying. Be it in judging the sturdiness of a chair, or feeling the texture of a glass table, holding a porcelain vase, or testing a perfume with a tester, trying on clothes in the trial room, the client should always be made to feel at home when it comes to the sense of 'touch'. Not all retail stores can hope at utilising the sense of taste. But for those who can, like snack and juice bars, food and beverage outlets, candy stores, chocolate stores should always focus on treating the sense of 'taste' of their customers. Free dishes or drinks on certain amount of purchases, free samples for tasting, chocolates and sweets for kids at any other kind of store are a few ways the retailer can engross in the sense of taste of the consumer.
- Overindulging the five senses of the consumers confirms a sensory shopping experience for them. Working out the visual merchandising of a store with this end in mind can work wonderfully for a brand. The retailers have the advantage of distinguishing their service from their competitors.
- (b) **Creative Brand Positioning-** The characterization of a specific brand is commonly associated with every graphical stimulus that it represents; that is, its logo, colors, images, icons, characters, etc., along with the transmission of its values through these representations. However, this representation is quite limited appreciation of the term. Besides traditional marketing other related disciplines has been to some extent unfair in reducing branding to a purely visual expression. This is even after being such a fundamental and vital variable to the success of a company, brand and organization. Modern marketing has begun to make use of techniques

that would have never been thought in the past as part of a strategy of differentiation and positioning. Such techniques break traditional schemes and think laterally in order to expand and solidify the mental territory occupied by each brand in our brains as customers. A technique that can be included in this category is sensory marketing which exploits the senses through stimuli designed to be directly connected to a particular brand. By creative repositioning of their products, companies can change how customers mentally categorise the products. They products struggling in the maturity phase of their life cycles can be rescued and brought back to the growth phase. In some cases, they might be able take their new products directly into the growth phase (Cobos, 2012). The use of five senses in creative brand positioning is described in the following paragraphs.

- (i) **Sight:** Previously, the most significant variable used by brands to generate recollection of products and develop an identity in the market was the sense of sight. Consumers appreciate logos, corporate colours, characters and other graphical tools with which they can identify a specific product. It's rare to find a person who does not recognize the white wave on the red background of Coca-Cola, the golden arches of McDonald's, the Apple logo, etc.
- (ii) **Sound:** Perhaps the variable most used after the sense of sight in advertising and marketing is the sense of hearing. In order to provide new attributes to their products and brands many corporations realized that visual objects were not ample to impact the consumer purchase decisions. Certainly, everyone recognizes the famous Nokia tune, Messenger alert sounds, the specific Intel notes at the end of each commercial, not to mention a few jingles.
- (iii) **Smell:** The human nose can set apart over 10,000 different odours, other than being the most sensitive of the senses. It has a tremendous power of evocating memories and experiences over the years. It is easy to remember, the shopping mall having the characteristic smell of the food court, which results in repeat visits from time to time just for the memories it evokes. Smell of Play-Doh and crayons at school, Starbucks with its coffee smell, not to mention the scents of some person, place or thing; all remind us of some product or the other.
- (iv) **Touch:** Textured book covers, labels and some printed shirts, forms that are better adapted to our hands in bottles of beverages, sauces, mayonnaise; plush, furry fabrics pleasant to the touch, sensitive touch screen

tablets and not to mention the mobile devices so common today. Bed Bath & Beyond, the brands that sells linens, curtains and other home decor, enables customers to experience and build trust with the warmth and comfort of their products by enforcing touch sensory by encouraging their costumers to feel the products (Dan-Bergman, 2014). No doubt brands recognize human's singular sensitivity and natural tendency to feel the environment as a means of interaction and involvement with it.

- (v) **Taste:** There is nothing like a nice and very distinctive flavour. It may be secret formula of catables that is jealously treasured, "x" ingredients, grandma's recipe, exotic ingredients, a whole mystique developed around a favourite food or drink. On the other hand, there are medicines with a pleasant taste for children and bubble gum flavoured toothpaste.

### III INDIAN RETAIL SECTOR

Over the last decade, there has been high growth in the Indian retail industry with a visible shift in the direction of organised retail formats. Some of the main domestic players in India are **Bharti Retail**, Reliance retail, Aditya Birla 'More', Tata Trent, Globus and Patanjali. Despite the downturns, organized retail which is a new occurrence in India is evolving exponentially, because more Indian people are entering into the consuming classes due to economic growth. Organized retailing formats lure more and more extant shoppers into its open doors. Over the coming years, Indian retail market is anticipated to develop at 7 per cent and reach a size of US\$ 850 billion by 2020. Organized retail is expected to develop at 25 per cent and reach a size of US\$ 200 billion by 2020 in comparison to traditional retail which is envisaged to grow at 5 per cent and reach a size of US\$ 650 billion(Source: FICCI).

Among the major retailers, more recently, in 2015, the parent company of the Kishore Biyani led Future Group named Future Retail that runs Big Bazaar had notified that its functions would be unified with Bharti Retail, that had been operating 'Easy day' supermarkets and convenience stores. The move helped Future Group deal with competition from other e-tailers and created a retail chain with 570 stores in 243 cities (Sarkar, 2015). The combined entity operates 197 Food Bazaar & 'Easy day' supermarkets, 203 Big Bazaar & 'Easy day' hypermarkets and 171 other stores comprising of Home Town, eZone, FBB and Food hall as presented in table 1.

**Table No. 1**  
**Key retail brands**

| Brand       | Cities | Stores | Area Sq.Ft. |
|-------------|--------|--------|-------------|
| Big Bazaar  | 118    | 218    | 97 mn       |
| Easyday     | 117    | 320    | 0.7 mn      |
| E zone      | 30     | 92     | 0.5 mn      |
| Fbb         | 31     | 51     | 0.5 mn      |
| Food Bazaar | 4      | 10     | 0.1 mn      |
| Foodhall    | 3      | 04     | 0.07 mn     |
| Hometown    | 21     | 43     | 1.3 mn      |

Source: Annual report Future retail limited, 2016

(a) **Easy day and its Private Brands** - In April 2008, a subsidiary of Bharti Enterprises, Bharti Retail, commenced its operations by inaugurating its first store in Ludhiana, Punjab. The stores, known as 'Easy Day', are a one-stop shop that caters to day-to-day needs of every family, according to company officials, they insisted that "it will bring together a relevant and wide product range, good quality products and great-in-experience and service-all under one roof". The store sells meat & poultry, fresh produce, personal care products, bakery and dairy products, daily-need groceries like staples, stationary, household articles, hosiery items and processed foods. Rajan Mittal, Joint Managing Director of Bharti Enterprises in an announcement of the plan for its retail ventures in 2007, had said that "Bharti was looking at approximately 10 million square feet of retail experience throughout the country and employing about 60,000 people". For the back-end operations Bharti proposed a joint venture with US retailer WalMart which was exclusive from the previous launch. In the third quarter of 2008, Bharti-WalMart joint venture kicked off its cash and carry (wholesale) business (Agencies, 2008). Bharti Walmart sells its own private brands besides strategically selling merchandise manufactured by several different companies. Bharti Walmart said in an interview, "Customers have begun to like private labels due to better quality, high food safety standards, international look and feel of products, customized packaging created after customer feedback and the credibility of the retailer." (Malviya, 2012) The various private brands include:

(i) **Great Value**: The brand named Great Value is the international brand of Walmart, it locally sells a range of every day-use products like floor & glass cleaners, toilet cleaners, flour, dish-wash bars, detergents, corn flakes, Indian snacks, staples, cereals, dry fruits, spices, jams, ketchups, tea, cold beverages and sodas. As a generic or house brand, the Great Value line consist of goods manufactured and packaged by a number of agricultural and food corporations but not

produced by Bharti Walmart which is only a labelling system for these items (Company brief,2012).

(ii) **Easy Choice**: The brand Easy Choice, sources products from Bharti Walmart, but the items are ordinarily a bit cheaper in comparison to Great Value products and it is driven in similar fashion as Great Value, also catering to the Fast-Moving Consumer Goods range.

(iii) **Mainstays**: It is another international brand by Walmart for common home goods like stationary, lighting solutions, cushion covers, towels, plastics, kitchen & bathroom accessories and bed linen (Choudhary, 2009).

(iv) **Equate**: Personal care products are sold by this global Walmart brand (Jain, 2012), including cosmetics, deodorants, baby care products, oral & dental care range, bar & liquid soaps and nail-cutters.

(v) **George**: George that started as Asda Stores Limited is a western brand of apparels that began as British supermarket chain of private clothing range and later moved to Walmart's Canadian and US stores (Choudhary, 2009).

(vi) **Astiva**: It is a regional brand by Bharti Walmart dealing with ethnic Indian wear, such as ready to stitch fabric, kurtis, kurtas and salwar kameez (Jain, 2012).

(vii) **Simply Basic**: It is a brand developed to cater to customer's everyday wear and clothing needs (Suppliers > Our Private Brands, n.d.).

(viii) **Home Trends**: This brand caters to glassware, crockery, cookware, table ware, home furnishings & décor and kitchen tools (Jain, 2012).

(ix) **Kid Connection**: It is a brand specially designed for toys, clothing and other items for children (Choudhary, 2009).

(x) **Faded Glory**: Footwear are provided by this brand (Choudhary, 2009).

(xi) **Athletic Works**: It is a brand for fitness & sports products that deals with fitness merchandise, gym goods, work-out equipment and athletic shoes (Choudhary, 2009).

**Table No. 2**  
**Easyday stores**

|                  |                        |
|------------------|------------------------|
| <b>Stores</b>    | <b>320</b>             |
| <b>Footfalls</b> | <b>49 mn</b>           |
| <b>Space</b>     | <b>0.7 mn. sq. ft.</b> |

**Source: Annual report Future retail limited, 2016**

(xii) **Marketing Overview-** During the past year, the Company continued to carry out various promotional events and activities to engage with the customer across formats. Various promotional events include Sabse Saste Din, Independence Sale, Public Holiday Sale, Wednesday Bazaar, Weekly Promotional Event and other format specific promotional events. Besides the promotional events, the Company was also part of Future Group Shopping Festival at group level. Various promotional initiatives, activities and events resulted in acquisition of new customers as well as higher footfalls during promotions. Events like Future Group Shopping Festival ensured that at least once in a month customer visited any of the Future Group

shopping formats. Cross promotional events ensured that the customers of one format visit another format. The Company also expanded the base of its loyalty programs through Payback, T24 etc. Further these programs ensured acquisition of a new set of customers and customer loyalty of existing customers. Various loyalty programs that bring back customers to stores at least twelve times in a year, resulting in cumulatively higher annual sales and higher frequency. These programs further take advantage of direct communication with customers and drive promotions offering customized merchandise. The financial performance is presented in table 3.

**Table No. 3**  
**Financial Highlights**  
**(US\$ in 10 Million)**

| <b>Particulars</b>   | <b>Financial year 2015-16</b> | <b>Financial year 2014-15</b> |
|--|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Revenue from Operations  | 105.526                       | 27.433                        |
| Other Income   | 0.239                         | 1.080                         |
| Total Revenue  | 105.765                       | 28.512                        |
| Profit/(Loss) Before Depreciation and Amortization Expense & Tax Expense | 0.791                         | (5.166)                       |
| Less: Depreciation and Amortization Expense                              | 0.567                         | 0.680                         |
| Profit/(Loss) Before Tax   | 0.224                         | (5.846)                       |
| Less: Tax Expense  | -                             | -                             |
| Profit/ (Loss) After Tax   | 0.224                         | (5.846)                       |
| Earnings Per Equity Share of Face Value of Rs 2/- each                   |                               |                               |
| Basic and diluted (in Rs)  | 0.010                         | (1.653)                       |

**Source: Annual report Future retail limited, 2016**

#### **IV MAJOR COMPETITORS OF EASYDAY**

The major competitors of Easy day are as follows:

- (a) **Reliance Fresh:** Reliance fresh belongs to Reliance Industries of India which is run by Mukesh Ambani, it forms part of their retail business in the form of a convenience store. At present there exist five hundred Reliance Fresh outlets all around the country. These stores sell dairy products, bars, fresh juice, staples, fresh

vegetables and fruits as well as groceries (Reliance, n.d.). They follow the method of directly sourcing fresh agricultural produce through Collection Centers located in villages which is their unique selling point. In October 2006 when the first Reliance Fresh store opened in Hyderabad, the company focused on "farm-to-fork" theory and said that the store's focal point would be fresh produce like fruits and vegetables at a much lower price. Besides providing low priced products the store provides an environment that lures the customer inside

although the aisles are not properly marked differentiating the products sold (Reliance fresh, n.d.). The salesmen are also not sensitive to the needs of the customer and are not properly acquainted with the items in stock (Khan et al., n.d.).

- (b) **Food Bazaar:** Food Bazaar provides for a shopping experience in a unique ambience. At Food Bazaar, one finds a hitherto unseen blend of an International supermarket atmosphere and a typical Indian bazaar. Started in April 2002, Food Bazaar is a supermarket chain with a difference, where the best of Indian and Western values has been put together to ensure customer comfort and satisfaction while shopping. The Indian values of “see-touch-feel” are rendered through the bazaar-like atmosphere created by displaying staples out in the open and the western values of hygiene, cleanliness and convenience are offered through pre-packed commodities (Food bazaar, n.d.).
- (c) **Patanjali:** Patanjali Ayurved Limited is an Indian fast-moving consumer goods company founded by Baba Ramdev along with Acharya Balkrishna with its manufacturing units and headquarters located in Haridwar. Patanjali Ayurved manufactures products in food and personal care category. According to Patanjali, all the products manufactured by the company are made from Ayurveda and natural components (Anand, 2015). The green component of the products is depicted through the green painted walls of its stores. As of May 2016, Patanjali sells through its 47,000 retail outlets. Patanjali Ayurved has tied up with Pittie Group and Future group on 9 October 2015. Patanjali Ayurved targeted US\$1540 million revenue in 2016 - 17, after sales grew 150 per cent in the previous financial year to US\$768 million (Dutta, 2016). The smell of herbs highlights their use in most products but sometimes it can be too overwhelming for the customers.
- (d) **Aditya Birla Fashion and Retail Ltd.:** Aditya Birla Group is an Indian Multinational Conglomerate. It owns both brick and mortar stores and online stores under the brand names of Pantaloons, Planet Fashion, Van Heusen, Allen Solly, Louis Philippe and Peter England. Their retail store enterprise named Madura Fashion and Lifestyle is a fast-developing clothing brand in India. It has more than 320 departmental stores and 1500 premium multi brand shops. It operates in around 100 cities. The company also outsources engineering, textiles and apparel (Tandon, 2015). They have a wide network which adds to their advantage.
- (e) **Infini Retail:** It is a retail chain of the Tata Group which operates under the brand name of Croma. It is a 100 per cent subsidiary of Tata Sons. Presently, there are 103 Croma stores in 25 cities. Croma caters to 8 categories which include gaming and accessories, photography, communication, kitchen appliance, home appliance, entertainment and computing with around 6000 products. It has well-lit stores that provide ease of accessing and looking at the features of its products. It is first large format specialist retail chain in India for consumer durables and electronics with successful expansion into Croma Zip stores, Croma Kiosks and latest online vertical, www.croma.com (Infini Retail, 2009). Trent (Westside) is also a subsidiary of the Tata group. Westside is operated by Trent since 1998, besides Landmark which is a leading bookstore chain. It has well designed outlets with neatly stacked products which appeal to the customers. The signboards are well placed for customers to move around. Pleasant music plays throughout the store. There are 42 retail outlets under the Westside brand. It offers self-service and customers can move around freely inspecting and picking items of their choice. The aisles are differentiated based on the customer type whether they are children, housewives, professional or general household items. Trent also operates Star Bazaar a hypermarket chain with branches in eight cities.
- (f) **Facing the competition-** The growing organised retail industry will lead to a tough competition for easy day stores. In this situation, its uniqueness and sensory appeal to customers is going to be an advantageous point over its competitors. The stores cater to a family's everyday needs but this is not enough to retain the customers and gain their loyalty. It is only possible through the pleasant shopping experience which remains in the mind of customers long after the purchase process is over. When one enters an easy day store, the logo is the first striking observation that a customer makes. The stores are well lighted and are decorated with colours according to occasion. The pleasant music playing throughout the stores is second enticing feature to be noted. It appeals to the customers' sense of hearing and makes shopping more fun and enjoyable. The third feature is the smell of fresh fruits and vegetables in its food and beverages section. This is both a symbol of the quality of the products and also a source of reliability of products for the customers. Next comes the sense of touch as all the products are arranged in assortments within the reach of customers. They can touch and feel the fabric, the texture and sturdiness of the products without any hassle. All the senses when

they come into play together, they create an environment that is unique to these stores.

With the increasing competition and new and upcoming retail formats like e-tailers, the brick and mortar retail outlets can still continue to appeal to the customers through their ambience and atmosphere which is not possible in case of e-tailers.

## V CONCLUSION

In order to fend competition, retailers nowadays need to focus on various sensory aspects like sight, sound, smell, touch and taste. These provide a unique ambience for the customers which appeals to them. The exploitation of the senses through stimuli designed to be directly related to a particular brand may sound too sophisticated, however, they link product-consumer through the description of the product and human sensitivity to receive and process information from the environment. Such a case has been presented through the example of Easy day. Easy day has become an easy to remember name in a short span of nine years since its inception in 2008. It has earned a name for itself as one-stop shop catering to day-to-day needs of every family. Easy day is an organised retail venture launched by Bharti Retail which is a subsidiary of Bharti Enterprises. Bharti has extended operations into emerging business areas over the past few years in the fast-expanding Indian economy. In 2015, Bharti retail merged its operations with Future Retail and further expanded its operations. As per the annual report of 2015-16, there are 320 stores of easy day and it has a footfall of 49 mn. It has established several private brands like easy choice, great value, home trends etc. Among hyper market, super markets and discount stores, easy day provides a sound experience in retail and wider presence. All this has been possible through the various marketing strategies applied by them which include sensory marketing. Sensory marketing helps to develop an emotional connect with the customers so that they remember the products and purchase experience for a long time. This unique experience is necessary to withstand competition from other stores like Reliance fresh, Westside, Patanjali, Food Bazaar. The ability to withstand competition in an environment where most of the products have equivalent quality requires the use of distinctive strategies. Such strategy for creative positioning among customers will pave a new path for future of retailing.

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