HARMONISING VALUE IN A CAR’S INTERIOR USING SENSORY MARKETING AS A LENS

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ABSTRACT


The human senses have always influenced people’s perceptions of the surrounding environment and objects. As a consequence of the evolvement of the experience economy, research on the human senses has increased substantially and attracted scholars from various research domains, including sensory marketing. In the marketing domain, research emphasises that value is created when consumers experience brands, products, and servicescapes that are exciting and fun to interact with through the human senses. In accordance with the service-dominant logic discussion, value is created from the service surrounding the product, such as the experience, which includes manufacturers and consumers. Although this has partly been captured under sensory marketing, little is known of how sensory marketing cues contribute to brand experience and brand value. Theoretically, it is emphasised that creating value is a service process, where the manufacturer’s goal is to plan and design a multisensory brand experience facilitated by the human senses leading to consumer value, as well as to enhance the brand as an image. Hence, the purpose of this dissertation is to understand and explain how value is created within a car’s interior by applying sensory marketing as a lens.

To address the purpose, an exploratory sequential mixed methods approach was employed to capture different aspects of creating value. The empirical data are based on a case study with a global premium car manufacturer, focusing on how value is created and offered within a car’s interior. The qualitative sequence explored how the manufacturer plans and designs a value proposition by embedding sensory cues in the car’s interior. Furthermore, how value-in-use is created by providing a brand experience is analysed. The quantitative sequence examined the relationship between brand experience and brand image to explain how consumer value as an experience is created.

The dissertation concludes that creating value in the car’s interior follows the logic of service-dominant logic and includes manufacturers and consumers. For the manufacturer, this was a strategic process to position the automotive brand as premium by offering value in the car’s interior. To achieve this, value was planned and designed by embedding sensory cues in the car’s interior. However, sensory cues were not embedded in isolation; rather they were harmonised with another to gestalt the coherent theme of Scandinavia in terms of colour, material, and shape to provide consumers with a brand experience for sense-making. Moreover, it was demonstrated that not all brand experience dimensions impact brand image to create value as an experience. The results show that sensory, affective, and harmony experience have a positive relationship with brand image, which generates the consumer’s value as an experience.

Overall, the dissertation contributes to the process of creating value in the car’s interior by relating sensory marketing with branding and service-dominant logic, with harmony uniting these. Similar to an orchestra, where the conductor strategically organises various instruments on the stage to play a harmonious melody for the audience, the manufacturer uses the car’s interior as a stage with sensory cues to provide consumers with a harmonious brand experience, leading to a positive brand image. Harmony has been identified, operationalised, measured, and tested with a positive result. Theoretical, managerial, and ethical implications are discussed.

Keywords: brand experience, brand image, sensory cues, sensory marketing, and service-dominant logic (SDL)