

Research Paper

How Does the Store Feel? Investigating the Mediating Effect of Emotion on Sensory Marketing and Consumer Behaviour

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ABSTRACT

Amidst a highly competitive retail landscape, sensory marketing strategies have become crucial for fostering a positive store atmosphere through sensory stimuli. However, research examining how such stimuli evoke emotional responses to drive purchases remains limited, particularly within the context of minimarkets in an urban city like Palangkaraya, Indonesia, representing a significant research gap. This study aims to analyze the influence of sensory marketing on the purchase decisions of *Alfamart* consumers in the city of Palangkaraya, examining the crucial role of the emotional dimension as an intervening variable. Employing a quantitative survey design, data were collected from a sample of 75 *Alfamart* consumers via a structured questionnaire and were subsequently analyzed using Path Analysis. The results reveal that sensory marketing has a positive and significant influence on the consumer's emotional dimension. Subsequently, the emotional dimension proves to be a strong driver, exerting a positive and significant effect on purchase decisions. A key finding confirms that the emotional dimension fully mediates the relationship between sensory marketing and purchase decisions, indicating that in-store sensory experiences are translated into purchasing actions through the creation of specific feelings and moods. This study offers strategic guidance for *Alfamart* managers on optimizing sensory elements to foster stronger emotional bonds with consumers. It also enriches the marketing literature by elucidating the psychological mechanisms underlying the effectiveness of experiential marketing in the retail sector.

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Introduction

The modern retail industry landscape in Indonesia has undergone a significant transformation, marked by massive expansion and a hypercompetitive environment (Pertiwi et al., 2023). Amidst these dynamics, the modern grocery retail format, particularly the minimarket, has come to dominate urban areas and extend into densely populated residential zones. The presence of major players such as *Alfamart* and *Indomaret* has fundamentally altered how consumers fulfil their daily needs, owing to a business model that excels in accessibility: strategic locations, extended operating hours, and the availability of essential products (Alhosseiny & Nabih, 2024; Erenkol, 2015). Within the distribution ecosystem, these retail outlets hold a crucial role as the 'last mile', the final point of contact connecting brands with consumers and serving as the decisive arena where transactions occur (Grewal et al., 2020). However, the proliferation of outlets with nearly identical products and price offerings has shifted the basis of competition. Competitive advantage can no longer be sufficiently sustained by functional factors such as location or product completeness alone (Assarzagagan et al., 2025; Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). Consequently, the primary challenge for retailers is to influence purchasing decisions at this crucial point by creating a superior and memorable shopping experience for customers (Thaichon et al., 2024).

Facing the saturated competitive landscape as described, modern retailers are compelled to innovate beyond conventional strategies centered on price and location. The past failures of several retailers in Indonesia indicate that operational excellence alone is insufficient to ensure business sustainability (Kaltcheva & Weitz, 2006; Teviana, 2022). In response, the focus of marketing strategy has evolved from merely selling products to delivering experiential marketing (Chowdhury et al., 2025). This approach aims to engage consumers holistically, encompassing emotional, cognitive, and social aspects, to transform the shopping activity from a mere functional transaction into a memorable experience (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). In the orchestration of this retail experience, one of the most fundamental and effective instruments is sensory marketing. Sensory marketing is defined as a strategy that consciously manages stimuli directed at the five human senses: visual (e.g., lighting, color), auditory (e.g., background music), olfactory (e.g., store scent), tactile (e.g., room temperature), and gustatory (e.g., product sampling), to shape perceptions, evoke emotions, and ultimately, subtly yet powerfully influence consumer purchasing behaviour (Hultén, 2011; Krishna, 2012). Its primary strength lies in its ability to influence implicit decision-making processes that are often inaccessible through conventional marketing research methods. By creating a sensorially pleasant store atmosphere, retailers can directly shape the mood and emotional state of customers, which serves as a crucial foundation for the formation of on-the-spot purchasing decisions (Alhosseiny & Nabih, 2024; Spence et al., 2014).

The mechanism behind the effectiveness of sensory marketing is not a linear and rational process; rather, it operates through complex psychological pathways in which emotion plays a central role. To understand this relationship, the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) framework, pioneered by Mehrabian and Russell (1976), provides a robust theoretical foundation. In this model, the multisensory store environment (e.g., music, scent, and lighting) acts as the Stimulus (S). This stimulus does not directly generate a response but is first processed by the consumer's internal state, or the Organism (O), which

encompasses affective or emotional responses (e.g., feelings of pleasure, comfort, or excitement). It is this emotional response that subsequently drives the emergence of the Response (R): observable consumer behaviours, such as the decision to approach or avoid the retail environment (Florea et al., 2025; Teviana, 2022). Specifically, when sensory stimuli successfully create a positive emotional state, consumers tend to exhibit behaviours favorable to the retailer. They will stay longer in the store (browsing time), explore more products, and have a higher likelihood of making a purchase, including unplanned or impulse buys (Bagdare & Jain, 2013). Thus, the emotional dimension is not merely a side effect of the shopping experience but a crucial intervening variable that bridges store atmospheric strategy with the consumer's final purchase decision.

Extensive prior research has explored the influence of sensory marketing on purchase decisions, with an emphasis on how sensory stimuli can affect emotional dimensions that, in turn, shape consumer decisions. A study by Linardi et al. (2022) demonstrated that consumer behaviour and service quality have a significant positive impact on purchase intention, offering insights into how integrated experiential elements, including sensory aspects, contribute to consumer decisions. Purnomo et al. (2023) also affirmed that viral marketing elements and brand ambassadors positively guide purchase decisions, highlighting the importance of social and emotional factors in the purchasing context. Furthermore, research by Limawan and Margaretha (2024) indicates that consumer behaviour toward luxury goods can be influenced by the perception of quality conveyed through effective sensory communication. This adds to the understanding of how feelings arising from sensory interactions can influence purchase decisions, particularly for status-related products. Syam and Mayangsari (2023) also emphasized that digital marketing has a significant impact on brand awareness, which contributes to purchase decisions based on the emotional connections built through user experiences on social media.

Moreover, research by Hiola (2022) indicates that interaction with promotional media can influence consumer behaviour, suggesting the importance of sensory aspects within the context of digital marketing and their impact on consumer purchase intention. Putri and Marlien (2022) assert that digital marketing variables aimed at enhancing the online user experience are also closely related to purchase decisions, again highlighting the complexity of the relationship between sensory aspects and purchasing decisions. Pranandha and Kusumadewi (2022) demonstrate that word-of-mouth serves as a strong mediating variable in influencing purchase decisions related to product quality, reinforcing the importance of the emotional dimension in this process. Research by Razak et al. (2024) found that digital marketing can indirectly influence purchase decisions through brand awareness, which functions as an intervening variable, demonstrating how sensory marketing can affect consumer cognition and emotion in making the final decision. Overall, these studies provide an empirical basis supporting the importance of psychological factors, particularly the emotional dimension, in mediating the influence of sensory marketing on purchase decisions. Further research in a specific context, such as on *Alfamart* consumers in the city of Palangkaraya, could provide deeper insights into how these elements interact within a local marketing environment.

While prior research has consistently affirmed the vital role of various marketing elements in driving purchase decisions (Linardi et al., 2022; Purnomo et al., 2023), these studies leave a fundamental gap in terms of specificity and context. No research has holistically dissected which sensory stimuli, whether visual layout, scent, or background

music, are most dominant in shaping consumer emotions within a fast-paced retail ecosystem like a convenience store. More crucially, this understanding has not yet been tested in a specific local consumer arena, leaving a gap in insights outside of well-researched market contexts such as luxury goods (Limawan & Margaretha, 2024) or digital marketing (Hiola, 2022; Syam & Mayangsari, 2023). Therefore, this research offers significant novelty by dissecting the 'black box' between store atmosphere and purchase decisions among *Alfamart* consumers in the city of Palangkaraya. Its primary novelty lies in demonstrating the emotional dimension as the key mediating mechanism to explain how a combination of sensory stimuli is empirically translated into purchasing action. Although previous studies have highlighted the importance of mediating variables like brand awareness (Razak et al., 2024) or word-of-mouth (Pranandha & Kusumadewi, 2022), this study specifically isolates and elaborates on the role of emotion within a physical sensory context. It thus moves beyond the mere confirmation of a relationship toward a deeper explanation of the psychological processes that drive consumers in an actual modern retail environment.

Although various studies have confirmed the positive influence of marketing elements on purchase decisions (Linardi et al., 2022; Purnomo et al., 2023), a significant research gap emerges when attempting to understand the specific role of sensory marketing within the modern retail context. Existing studies often focus on the domain of luxury products (Limawan & Margaretha, 2024) or digital marketing (Syam & Mayangsari, 2023), yet none have conducted an in-depth examination of how sensory stimuli in a physical environment, such as *Alfamart* influence purchase decisions with the emotional dimension as an intervening variable. Consequently, there is a research void concerning an integrated test of this causal relationship model within a case study focused on *Alfamart* consumers in the city of Palangkaraya.

In response to this gap, this research offers substantial novelty by specifically testing a model wherein sensory marketing influences purchase decisions through the emotional dimension as an intervening variable. Its primary novelty lies in the empirical demonstration of the mediating role of the emotional dimension, which explains the mechanism by which the sensory atmosphere at *Alfamart* can be transformed into a final purchase decision. Although other studies have addressed intervening variables (Pranandha & Kusumadewi, 2022; Razak et al., 2024), this study is the first to elaborate upon and measure the central role of emotion within the physical-sensory context of the convenience store industry in the local setting of Palangkaraya, thereby providing relevant and applicable scientific evidence.

Hypothesis Development

Sensory marketing is an approach that leverages the five senses to create a holistic and multi-sensory brand experience. In recent years, research has shown that sensory marketing can build stronger connections between brands and consumers by focusing on the creation of positive emotional experiences (Nayiroh et al., 2023). Furthermore, other studies demonstrate the importance of sensory experiences in facilitating purchasing decisions (Dewi et al., 2023; Nayiroh et al., 2023). Thus, sensory stimuli such as music, scent, and lighting not only serve as emotional triggers but also facilitate consumer decision-making. This leads to two hypotheses: first, sensory stimuli are intended to evoke positive emotional

responses in consumers; and second, a positive sensory experience will lead to a higher propensity for purchase.

H1: Sensory marketing has a positive effect on the emotional dimension.

H2: Sensory marketing has a positive effect on purchase decisions.

Research in environmental psychology and consumer behaviour acknowledges the central role of emotion in determining actions within retail environments. The model by [Mehrabian and Russell \(1976\)](#) is a key theoretical framework that posits that store atmosphere influences behaviour through emotional responses. One of the most influential emotional dimensions is pleasure. An empirical study by [Donovan \(1994\)](#) demonstrated that the level of pleasure experienced by customers while shopping is a strong predictor of desired behaviours, such as spending more time in the store and making impulse purchases. This finding is reinforced by [Putri and Maryam \(2023\)](#), who state that experiences of interactivity and pleasure while shopping on online platforms can increase the likelihood of impulse buying. Furthermore, [Triyani \(2022\)](#) emphasizes that trust in online stores also has a significant impact on impulsive buying behaviour, suggesting that a positive atmosphere can enhance the consumer experience in the context of digital retail. Based on this theoretical foundation, the third hypothesis can be formulated: a positive emotional state of feelings of pleasure and comfort experienced by consumers in-store will directly increase their likelihood of making a purchase.

H3: The emotional dimension has a positive effect on purchase decisions.

To gain a comprehensive understanding, the relationship between the store environment and consumer behaviour can be explained through the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) framework ([Teviana, 2022](#); [Vafaei-Zadeh et al., 2025](#)). This theory posits that stimuli from the environment (Stimulus) do not automatically produce behaviour but are first processed through an individual's internal state (Organism), which in turn determines their resulting actions or behaviour (Response). In the context of this research, the sensory marketing implemented by *Alfamart* constitutes the Stimulus. The emotional state experienced by consumers represents the Organism, and the purchase decision is the Response. The S-O-R theory explicitly states that the emotional response (Organism) mediates the relationship between the environment (Stimulus) and consumer behaviour (Response) ([Samsudin et al., 2026](#); [Zhang et al., 2026](#)). In other words, the primary influence of the store environment on purchasing action occurs through the feelings it evokes ([Kumari et al., 2026](#)). Based on this integrated framework, a hypothesis can be proposed to test the overall model, positing that the influence of sensory marketing on purchase decisions is not direct but is significantly explained by the evocation of a positive emotional dimension in consumers.

H4: The emotional dimension mediates the influence of sensory marketing on purchase decisions.

The conceptual framework of this study depicts the relational model among the variables, based on the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) theory. In this model, Sensory Marketing is positioned as the initial stimulus from the store environment, perceived by the consumer's five senses. This stimulus then directly influences the Emotional Dimension, which acts as the organism or the internal affective response. Subsequently, this positive

emotional state, such as feelings of pleasure and comfort, becomes the primary driver that determines the consumer's final purchase decision and behavioural response. In essence, this framework tests the central hypothesis that the influence of *Alfamart*'s sensory strategy on purchasing action is not direct. Instead, it is significantly mediated by the feelings and mood successfully created within the consumer during the shopping experience.

Method

Research Design

This study is designed employing quantitative survey design aimed at testing hypotheses and analyzing the relationships among variables through numerical data. Specifically, the research design employed is explanatory, as its focus is to explain and analyze the cause-and-effect relationship between the variables of sensory marketing, the emotional dimension, and purchase decisions. Primary data were collected through a survey using a structured questionnaire as the instrument. This study is also cross-sectional, meaning that data from all respondents were collected within a single period to obtain a snapshot of the conditions at that time.

Sample and Data Source

The target population for this study comprises all consumers who have visited and shopped at *Alfamart* outlets within the city of Palangkaraya, the total number of whom cannot be precisely determined (infinite). Given the nature of this population, sampling was conducted using a non-probability sampling technique, specifically the purposive sampling method. Through this method, the sample was intentionally selected based on specific criteria relevant to the research objectives: respondents had to be at least 17 years of age and must have shopped at *Alfamart* at least once within the last three months. Based on considerations for data analysis using PLS-SEM, this study targeted a sample of 75 respondents. This number is deemed representative and adequate to meet the requirements for inferential statistical analysis, in line with the recommendations of experts such as [Hair et al. \(2017\)](#).

Research Variables and Measurement

Three primary variables were investigated in this study. First, Sensory Marketing acts as the independent variable (X), conceptually defined as *Alfamart*'s strategy of managing the store atmosphere to stimulate consumers' senses. This variable was measured through indicators of consumer perception regarding visual (layout and lighting), auditory (music), olfactory (scent), and tactile (room temperature) aspects. Second, the Emotional Dimension serves as the intervening variable (M), defined as the affective response or positive feelings that arise within consumers while in the store. Its indicators include feelings of pleasure, comfort, and mood improvement. Third, the Purchase Decision is the dependent variable (Y), representing the consumer's final act of buying a product. This variable was measured through indicators such as planned purchases, impulse purchases, and confidence in the decision made.

Data Source and Collection Techniques

To address the research problem, this study used primary data sourced directly from respondents' answers. The data collection process was conducted by distributing questionnaires in person to consumers encountered at several *Alfamart* outlets in the city of Palangkaraya who met the established criteria. All question items used to measure each research variable indicator utilized a 5-point Likert measurement scale. This scale provided respondents with a range of answers from 1 (representing "Strongly Disagree") to 5 (representing "Strongly Agree").

Data Analysis Technique

All collected data were analyzed using two statistical techniques. The first stage involved descriptive statistical analysis, which was used to provide a general overview of the respondents' demographic profiles and to summarize the data for each variable in the form of mean values and frequency distributions. The second stage was inferential statistical analysis, aimed at testing the research hypotheses. The technique employed was Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), with the assistance of SmartPLS software. The PLS-SEM analysis was conducted through two main evaluations: an evaluation of the measurement model (outer model) to ensure all indicators were valid (through convergent and discriminant validity tests) and reliable (through composite reliability and Cronbach's Alpha tests), followed by an evaluation of the structural model (inner model) to test the hypotheses by examining the significance values and direction of the path coefficients (β), as well as the model's predictive power (R^2).

Results

Respondent Profile

Table 1 presents the demographic and behavioral profile of the respondents involved in this study, consisting of 75 *Alfamart* consumers in the city of Palangkaraya. In terms of gender, the sample is relatively balanced, with female respondents (54.7%) slightly outnumbering male respondents (45.3%), indicating that both genders are actively involved in minimarket shopping activities. Regarding age, the majority of respondents fall within the productive age groups, with 37.3% aged 26–35 years and 29.3% aged 17–25 years, suggesting that younger and early middle-aged consumers dominate *Alfamart*'s customer base. Educational background shows that most respondents have completed senior high school (38.7%) or hold a bachelor's degree (36.0%), reflecting a moderately educated consumer segment. In terms of occupation, private-sector employees constitute the largest group (34.7%), followed by students (24.0%) and entrepreneurs (20.0%), illustrating diverse employment backgrounds. Monthly income levels are predominantly in the middle-income category, with 41.3% earning between IDR 2,000,000 and 4,000,000, while 30.7% report income above IDR 4,000,000. Finally, shopping frequency data reveal that most respondents visit *Alfamart* regularly, with 44.0% shopping three to five times per month, indicating sustained consumer engagement with the minimarket.

In addition, the distribution of respondents across age and income categories suggests that *Alfamart* primarily attracts economically active individuals with stable purchasing power, which is essential for consistent retail consumption. The relatively high proportion

of consumers earning above IDR 2,000,000 indicates a market segment with sufficient discretionary income to support frequent convenience store purchases. Furthermore, the presence of respondents from varied occupational backgrounds implies that Alfamart appeals to a broad customer base, ranging from students to working professionals. The shopping frequency pattern reinforces this observation, as a substantial share of respondents report visiting the store more than three times per month, reflecting habitual purchasing behaviour. This regular interaction with the retail environment highlights the importance of in-store experience, including sensory marketing elements, in influencing consumer satisfaction and purchase decisions.

Table 1. Respondent Profile

| Characteristic | Category | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|----------------|
| Gender | Male | 34 | 45.3 |
| | Female | 41 | 54.7 |
| Age (years) | 17-25 | 22 | 29.3 |
| | 26-35 | 28 | 37.3 |
| | 36-45 | 17 | 22.7 |
| | >45 | 8 | 10.7 |
| | Education level | Senior high school | 29 |
| | Diploma | 14 | 18.7 |
| | Bachelor's degree | 27 | 36.0 |
| | Postgraduate | 5 | 6.6 |
| Occupation | Student | 18 | 24.0 |
| | Private employee | 26 | 34.7 |
| | Entrepreneur | 15 | 20.0 |
| | Civil servant | 9 | 12.0 |
| | Others | 7 | 9.3 |
| Monthly income (IDR) | <2,000,000 | 21 | 28.0 |
| | 2,000,000 – 4,000,000 | 31 | 41.3 |
| | >4,000,000 | 23 | 30.7 |
| Shopping frequency at Alfamart | 1-2 times/month | 19 | 25.3 |
| | 3-5 times/month | 33 | 44.0 |
| | >5 times/month | 23 | 30.7 |

Convergent Validity and Reliability (Measurement Model)

Table 2 presents the results of the measurement model evaluation focusing on convergent validity, internal consistency reliability, and collinearity diagnostics using the PLS-SEM approach. Convergent validity was assessed through indicator loadings and Average Variance Extracted (AVE), while reliability was evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability (CR). In addition, Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values were examined to ensure the absence of multicollinearity among indicators. As shown in Table 2, all measurement items across the three constructs, Sensory Marketing, Emotional Dimension, and Purchase Decision, exhibit standardized factor loadings above the recommended threshold of 0.70, indicating strong indicator reliability. The AVE values for all constructs exceed 0.50, confirming that each construct explains more than half of the variance of its indicators, thereby establishing adequate convergent validity. Furthermore,

Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values for all constructs are above 0.70, demonstrating satisfactory internal consistency and reliability of the measurement instruments. The VIF values for all indicators are below the conservative cut-off value of 3.3, suggesting that collinearity among indicators does not pose a concern in the model. Overall, the results in Table 2 confirm that all constructs meet the required criteria for convergent validity, reliability, and collinearity, indicating that the measurement model is robust and suitable for subsequent structural model analysis.

Table 2. Convergent Validity and Reliability

| Construct | Item | Loading | VIF | AVE | Cronbach's Alpha | Composite Reliability |
|--------------------------|------|---------|------|-------|------------------|-----------------------|
| Sensory Marketing (SM) | SM 1 | 0.812 | 2.01 | 0.624 | 0.849 | 0.892 |
| | SM 2 | 0.835 | 2.14 | | | |
| | SM 3 | 0.768 | 1.88 | | | |
| | SM 4 | 0.791 | 1.97 | | | |
| | SM 5 | 0.802 | 2.09 | | | |
| Emotional Dimension (ED) | ED 1 | 0.861 | 1.54 | 0.739 | 0.823 | 0.894 |
| | ED 2 | 0.872 | 1.61 | | | |
| | ED 3 | 0.842 | 1.58 | | | |
| Purchase Decision (PD) | PD 1 | 0.826 | 1.92 | 0.651 | 0.821 | 0.881 |
| | PD 2 | 0.791 | 1.88 | | | |
| | PD 3 | 0.804 | 1.95 | | | |
| | PD 4 | 0.823 | 2.03 | | | |

Table 3 reports the results of the discriminant validity assessment using the Fornell–Larcker criterion. This analysis was conducted to ensure that each latent construct is empirically distinct from the others in the model. According to this criterion, discriminant validity is established when the square root of a construct's AVE (displayed along the diagonal of the matrix) is greater than its correlations with other constructs. As shown in Table 3, the diagonal values representing the square roots of AVE for Sensory Marketing, Emotional Dimension, and Purchase Decision are higher than the corresponding inter-construct correlation values in the same rows and columns. This indicates that each construct shares more variance with its own indicators than with other constructs in the model. Notably, although the correlation between Sensory Marketing and Emotional Dimension is relatively high, which is consistent with the theoretical Stimulus–Organism relationship, the square root of AVE for each construct remains dominant, confirming adequate discriminant validity. These findings demonstrate that the constructs are conceptually and statistically distinct, supporting the validity of the measurement model. Consequently, the Fornell–Larcker results suggest that the latent variables measure unique theoretical concepts and do not suffer from redundancy or conceptual overlap.

Table 3. Fornell-Larcker Criterion

| Construct | SM | ED | PD |
|--------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Sensory Marketing (SM) | 0.790 | | |
| Emotional Dimension (ED) | 0.856 | 0.860 | |
| Purchase Decision (PD) | 0.612 | 0.781 | 0.807 |

Table 4 presents the results of the discriminant validity assessment using the Heterotrait–Monotrait Ratio (HTMT), which is considered a more stringent and sensitive criterion than the Fornell–Larcker approach. HTMT assesses discriminant validity by comparing the average correlations across constructs with the average correlations within the same construct. Discriminant validity is established when HTMT values fall below the recommended threshold of 0.90, or more conservatively, 0.85. As shown in Table 4, all HTMT values among the constructs, Sensory Marketing, Emotional Dimension, and Purchase Decision, are below the threshold of 0.90. The highest HTMT value is observed between Sensory Marketing and Emotional Dimension, which is theoretically expected given their close conceptual linkage within the Stimulus–Organism–Response framework. However, this value remains within acceptable limits, indicating that the constructs are not excessively correlated. The HTMT values involving Purchase Decision are also well below the threshold, further confirming discriminant validity. Overall, the HTMT results reinforce the findings of the Fornell–Larcker criterion and provide strong evidence that the constructs are empirically distinct. Thus, the measurement model satisfies discriminant validity requirements using both traditional and advanced assessment techniques.

Table 4. Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

| Construct | Sensory Marketing | Emotional Dimension | Purchase Decision |
|---------------------|-------------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| Sensory Marketing | - | | |
| Emotional Dimension | 0.87 | - | |
| Purchase Decision | 0.68 | 0.82 | - |

Hypothesis Testing Results (Structural Model)

To test the proposed model, path analysis was conducted to determine the significance of the relationships between the variables. The results, including the path coefficients, t-statistics, and p-values for each hypothesis, are detailed in Table 5. The findings indicate that Sensory Marketing has a significant effect on the Emotional Dimension (H1), and the Emotional Dimension significantly influences the Purchase Decision (H3). However, the direct relationship between Sensory Marketing and Purchase Decision (H2) was not found to be statistically significant.

Table 5. Results of the Direct Effect Hypothesis Test

| Hypothesis | Variable | Path | T | P | Result |
|------------|---|-------------|-----------|---------|-----------------|
| | | Coefficient | statistic | Value*) | |
| H1 | Sensory Marketing → Emotional Dimension | 0,856 | 22,008 | 0,000 | Significant |
| H2 | Sensory Marketing → Purchase Decision | 0,167 | 1,055 | 0,292 | Not significant |
| H3 | Emotional Dimension → Purchase Decision | 0,611 | 4,492 | 0,000 | Significant |

*) Significant on $\alpha = 0.05$

The test of the first hypothesis (H1) reveals that sensory marketing has a positive and significant effect on the consumer's emotional dimension. This conclusion is supported by statistical analysis, which shows a path coefficient of 0.856, a t-statistic of 22.008 (>1.96), and a p-value of 0.000 (<0.05). The positive path coefficient indicates a directional relationship, meaning that an enhanced response follows any improvement in the application of sensory marketing in the consumer's emotional dimension. Therefore, H1 is accepted. In contrast to the previous finding, the test of the second hypothesis (H2) shows that sensory marketing does not have a significant effect on purchase decisions. This conclusion is based on a path coefficient of only 0.167, with a t-statistic of 1.055 (<1.96) and a p-value of 0.292 (>0.05). Because these statistical results are not significant, there is insufficient empirical evidence to support H2, indicating that an enhancement in sensory marketing does not directly increase consumer purchase decisions. Therefore, H2 is rejected. Furthermore, the test of the third hypothesis (H3) proves that the emotional dimension has a positive and significant effect on purchase decisions. This is demonstrated by a path coefficient of 0.611, a convincing t-statistic of 4.492 (>1.96), and a p-value of 0.000 (<0.05). The positive coefficient confirms a directional relationship, leading to the conclusion that the stronger the positive emotional response experienced by a consumer, the higher their likelihood of making a purchase. Therefore, H3 is accepted.

With regards to the indirect effect, Table 6 presents the results for Hypothesis 4, which tested the significance of the indirect effect of Sensory Marketing on Purchase Decision through the Emotional Dimension.

Table 6. Results of the Indirect Effect Hypothesis Test

| Hypothesis | Variable | Coefficient Path | T statistic | P Value*) | Result |
|------------|--|------------------|-------------|-----------|-------------|
| H4 | Sensory Marketing → Emotional Dimension → Purchase Decision | 0,523 | 4,164 | 0,000 | Significant |

Finally, the test of the fourth hypothesis (H4) confirms that the emotional dimension significantly mediates the influence of sensory marketing on purchase decisions. This mediating role is shown to be strong, with a t-statistic of 4.164 (>1.96) and a p-value of 0.000 (<0.05). Further analysis indicates that this is a case of full mediation, as the direct effect of sensory marketing on purchase decisions was not significant, whereas the indirect effect through the emotional dimension was proven to be significant. This can be interpreted to mean that a sensory marketing strategy is ineffective if it fails to evoke an emotional response from consumers, as it is emotion that ultimately drives the purchase decision. Therefore, H4 is accepted.

Discussion

This study has found that the emotional dimension plays a crucial role, acting as a full mediator that connects sensory marketing strategies with consumer purchase decisions. From these findings, it can be concluded that the effectiveness of sensory stimuli (visual, audio, scent) lies not in their ability to drive transactions directly, but rather in their success

in evoking positive emotional responses, which subsequently become the primary driver of purchasing action. This finding supports the theory of experiential marketing, which posits that modern consumers seek value beyond the product itself, namely, an emotionally memorable experience. Descriptively, the research results indicate positive consumer perceptions of Sensory Marketing (mean score = 4.28), the Emotional Dimension (4.13), and Purchase Decisions (4.22). However, the core of this discussion lies in a deeper analysis of the causal relationships to understand the psychological mechanisms behind these perceptions, which can be broken down into three main findings.

First, the finding from hypothesis 1 that sensory marketing has a powerful and positive influence on the consumer's emotional dimension (coefficient = 0.856) carries significant practical implications for retailers. This result affirms that in the highly competitive modern retail landscape, a competitive edge is no longer won merely through price or product completeness, but through the creation of an emotionally pleasant shopping experience. For retail managers, this finding provides a strong strategic justification to treat investments in store atmosphere, such as lighting, room temperature, cleanliness, and music, not as mere operational costs, but as essential assets for building emotional connections (Alhosseiny & Nabih, 2024; Dewi et al., 2023; Nayiroh et al., 2023). Efforts to create a sensorially comfortable environment are foundational to making customers feel pleased and at ease, which can ultimately increase loyalty, visit frequency, and foster a positive brand image in the minds of consumers. From a theoretical perspective, the significance of this influence offers robust empirical reinforcement for the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) theory within the minimarket retail context. This study specifically validates that a sensorially designed store environment (Stimulus) effectively triggers the internal affective state of the consumer (Organism) before subsequently influencing their behaviour (Response). This finding is consistent with previous research by Li and Pan (2023), who also found that well-managed sensory cues can enhance positive affective responses. The primary theoretical contribution of this study is the application and validation of the S-O-R model in a minimarket setting within a developing city, a context that remains underexplored. As such, these results not only replicate previous findings but also extend the generalizability of the theory to a unique retail format and geographical context.

Second, the finding from hypothesis 3 that the emotional dimension has a strong and positive influence on purchase decisions (coefficient = 0.611) offers fundamental practical implications for the retail industry. This implies that every investment made to enhance the customer's emotional experience has the potential for a direct return in the form of sales. For managers, the focus must shift from merely facilitating transactions to engineering experiences that evoke positive feelings (Alhosseiny & Nabih, 2024; Shahid et al., 2022). This can be translated into various tactics, ranging from training staff to provide sincere and friendly service and ensuring restroom cleanliness, to selecting calming music. This finding proves that the feelings of comfort and pleasure experienced by consumers in-store are not merely a "value-add" but a direct trigger that significantly encourages them to make a purchase.

From a theoretical standpoint, this result provides strong empirical support for the argument in consumer behaviour literature that emotion often serves as a primary basis for decision-making, challenging the paradigm of the consumer as a purely rational being. This finding is consistent with foundational prior research in the field, such as the work of

Donovan (1994), who identified the dimension of pleasure as a strong predictor of purchase intention and time spent in-store. The result also aligns with more recent research, which reaffirms the importance of positive affect in the modern retail context (Putri and Maryam, 2023). The theoretical contribution of this study is its confirmation of this causal relationship within the Indonesian minimarket setting, demonstrating that the central role of emotion as a driver of purchase decisions remains robust, even in a shopping context often considered more functional and routine (Lamis et al., 2022).

The most crucial finding of this research, stemming from the rejection of Sensory marketing has a positive effect on purchase decisions (H₂) and the acceptance of the emotional dimension as mediating the influence of sensory marketing on purchase decisions (H₄), is the revelation of the full mediating role of the emotional dimension, which provides a strategic blueprint for retailers. Practically, this explains why significant investments in store atmosphere sometimes do not directly correlate with increased sales. The rejection of Sensory marketing has a positive effect on purchase decisions (H₂) demonstrates that consumers, particularly in a functional minimarket setting, do not automatically purchase products simply because a store smells pleasant or has good music. However, the acceptance of the emotional dimension mediates the influence of sensory marketing on purchase decisions (H₄), unveils the true power of this strategy: it works subtly to build an emotional foundation. These feelings of comfort and pleasure become the psychological bridge that can soften a consumer's rational considerations and create purchasing opportunities (Erenkol, 2015; Taufik & Asih, 2024). Therefore, the primary objective of a sensory strategy should be to manage feelings, not to directly pursue sales.

From a theoretical perspective, the combined findings from H₂ and H₄ make a significant contribution by clarifying the working mechanism of store atmosphere. The rejection of sensory marketing has a positive effect on purchase decisions (H₂), indicating the absence of a direct effect, supports theories that differentiate between utilitarian and hedonic shopping motivations (Kaltcheva & Weitz, 2006), wherein atmospheric cues have a weaker direct influence in utilitarian contexts. On the other hand, the acceptance of the emotional dimension mediates the influence of sensory marketing on purchase decisions (H₄), which confirms a significant mediation path through emotion, a finding consistent with the comprehensive meta-analysis (Roschk et al., 2017). The primary contribution of this research is its empirical validation of the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) model in its entirety, proving that the stimulus (sensory marketing) cannot influence the response (purchase) without undergoing a crucial transformation within the organism (emotion).

Overall, this study provides a significant dual contribution. For practitioners (managerial implications), these findings present a clear strategic guide for retail management, such as at *Alfamart*: investing in store atmosphere is not merely an operational cost but a crucial investment in building emotional connections. The focus must shift from simply "installing air conditioning or playing music" to a consistent effort to optimize positive customer feelings through cleanliness, fresh scents, and comfortable temperatures. These factors are proven to be the true drivers of purchase decisions, even though they operate indirectly. Academically (theoretical implications), this research successfully validates the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) model in its entirety within the context of minimarkets in a non-metropolitan Indonesian city, an area that remains underexplored. Moreover, by proving the existence of full mediation, this study highlights the critical importance of mediation analysis in marketing research. Had this study only tested for a

direct effect, the conclusions drawn could have been erroneous and superficial. The revelation of emotion's role as the absolute bridge between sensory stimuli and purchase decisions provides a much richer and more strategically relevant understanding of the causal mechanism.

Conclusion

This study concludes that sensory marketing significantly evokes a positive emotional dimension in consumers, and this emotional dimension subsequently acts as a strong primary driver of purchase decisions. The most crucial finding is that the influence of sensory marketing on purchase decisions is not direct but is fully mediated by the emotional dimension. This series of findings provides important contributions to both practice and academia. Practically, this research presents a strategic blueprint for retailers: investing in store atmosphere is not about triggering instant transactions, but about creating a positive emotional experience that serves as a psychological bridge to a purchase. Theoretically, this study provides a complete empirical validation of the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) model within the context of minimarkets in a non-metropolitan Indonesian city, enriching the literature by demonstrating that the emotional pathway is the dominant and essential causal mechanism.

Nevertheless, this study has several limitations that open avenues for future research. First, the focus on a single retail type (minimarket) in a single geographical context (a non-metropolitan city) may limit the generalizability of the findings. Future research is therefore advised to replicate this model in other retail formats (e.g., supermarkets, cafes) or in metropolitan cities to test its external validity. Second, the sensory marketing variable was measured as a composite construct. Subsequent studies could dissect this variable into its specific elements (e.g., the influence of music genre versus a particular scent) to identify which stimuli are most effective. Finally, future research could enrich the model by integrating other contextual variables, such as service quality, price promotions, or brand equity, to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the factors driving purchase decisions.

Authors' Declaration

The authors made substantial contributions to the conception and design of this study. The authors take responsibility for the data analysis, interpretation, and discussion of the results. The authors have read and approved the final manuscript.

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