

THE SMELL IN THE COMMERCIAL INTERIOR DESIGN

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1. Context

The research presented in this paper leads to reflections around the relation between individuals and the built environment, which is emotionally impacted by commercial interior design, in this case, regarding the sense of smell as a protagonist during the design development process.

Currently, because brands seek to distinguish themselves from competitors, the focus has been redirected to the experiences rather than the product itself (SPENCE et al., 2014, p.472). This distance from the competition is reached by resources of commercial interior design, in order to perform some functions, such as promoting shopping experience, developing brand awareness and thus setting the brand in the consumer's memory, and achieving their loyalty (LINDSTROM, 2007).

Design professionals, architects, and interior designers, when designing a store for a particular brand, seek to create an atmosphere compatible with the brand concept (Henshaw et al., 2017). But actually sometimes they ignore the fact that, for the atmosphere to be perceived by consumers and to promote memorable experience, an effective way is to design focusing on the emotions that encompass the senses. Smell, which is still a little explored sense in architecture and interior designs fields, is the sense that most connects to emotions and memory (NEVES, 2017), and may even influence

the shopping behavior of consumers (GEARGEOURA; PARENTE, 2009).

In this scope, research carried out in emotional design context also contributes to the understanding of correlations between individual's emotions and their decision-making power. According to Donald Norman (2008, p. 32-33), the emotional system is linked to behavioral system, and thus emotions control individuals' reactions to stimuli, because when they come into contact with tastes and smells, they may salivate, or cry when they feel sadness, and therefore, sensations cause physical reactions.

Regarding approaches about cognitive ergonomics and emotional design, this article is the result of a research that was elaborated to reveal the commercial environment as an active influence on individuals' behavior, arousing their emotions and, thus, the stimulus of their behavior.

Aspects covered in this paper depart from the following problem: how could the sense of smell be incorporated to the interior design, more precisely in a commercial environment? Therefore, the main aim is to reflect, based on a theoretical multidisciplinary reference, about the possibilities of smell incorporation in interior design development of commercial spaces.

2. Methodology

The methodology is based on a bibliographical review. Theoretical contributions are based, in majority, on studies developed by Pallasmaa, Okamoto, Neves and Damazio, which explore built environment theme in a sensitive way, taking into account all human senses and issues related to ergodesign. While Norman, Rosa and Damazio collaborate with approaches and concepts on emotional design, Oliveira and Mont'alvão direct their focus on built environment ergonomics and cognitive ergonomics. Authors like Saddi, Malhotra, Gergeoura and Parente, Henshaw and Lindstrom approach the commercial environment theme. On the other hand, the work of Jaquet, Velloso and Rector e Trinta elucidate the importance of smells and smell sense. The point of view from these different authors, which sometimes complement each other, were confronted in order to analyze its possible contributions to the research.

Considering the issues mentioned above, we empirically verified how some brands that stand out in retail market field contemplate smell, both in their products and in interior design. Melissa, a nationally and internationally recognized brand of women's footwear, uses the marketing strategy of sensorial branding in points of sale (POS) and its products to catch market's eye.

These strategies aim to make an association with sensory elements in consumers' mind, as well as with the aroma of chewing gum inserted in the plastic of their shoes and dissipated in their stores, with the shoe brand (SILVA, 2016, 32).

On the other hand, MMartan, a great brand of household linen, has stood out over the years for presenting products that are identified by touch, delicacy and sophistication and its point of sale are exclusive due to its spacious, comfortable and flavored space, which brings more authenticity to the brand (WORLD OF MARKS, 2010?).

Both of the women's shoes brand and the household linen brand are emblematic examples of the use of the sensorial resources evidenced in this article, which instigate individuals' perception and memory.

These and a few other brands turns the commercial space into an atmosphere of experience, influencing customer behavior.

3. Results

Academic researches about detailing and analysis of manufactured aromas introduced in various different environments, in addition to retail market, are still embryonic (Henshaw et al., 2017, p.82). Gergeoura and Parente (2009, p.2) discuss the parameter of studies carried out regarding the theme of the influence of environment on consumers' behavior in the last decades, concluding that these research, between 1970s and 1990s, focused on the integration of individual effects, and such research was mostly in psychology and marketing fields. In the 1990s, the surveys lost strength, mainly due to the complexity of the subject. In recent years, the field of psychology were engaged to experimental research, seeking to explain the mechanics of perceptual, cognitive and decision-making processes.

The authors assert that the research focused on detail rather than the whole issue are directed to psychology field and not marketing, the area of knowledge of these authors, being necessary to restart the research with a broader focus, observing the environmental factors acting on consumer's behavior, and also that "it is possible that the incompleteness and fragmentation of knowledge on this subject are due to its enormous complexity and depth" (GEARGEOURA; PARENTE, 2009, p. 2).

The materiality of the building gives space for its ability to mediate "experiences that take place indoor" (NEVES; DAMAZIO, 2011, p. 122), and this meaning is also approached by Pallasmaa (2011). Design professionals, architects, and interior designers base their products on shape and function, but by focusing on emotional responses and producing experiences for individuals, the built environment would develop social effects and benefit from changes that design actions are capable to execute (NEVES; DAMAZIO, 2011, p. 122). Thus, it is essential to recognize the relevance of the smell in design, emphasizing that "we should not leave it aside in the during design act" (NEVES, 2017, p. 52).

4. Conclusion

At the end of this article, especially from the scope of the adopted theoretical structure, it turns clear how a commercial interior design can potentially enrich the shopping experience through the senses, and, specifically in this case, the smell sense. By the empirical analysis carried out in this research, it is possible to conclude that, by implementing the smell in interior spaces and allowing the fragrance to be acquired in different forms, brands let their clients replicate an olfactory experience at their own homes, using sensory strategy to also keep customers loyalty. It also highlights the lack of researches about human senses in commercial space, store atmosphere related to the shopping experience, the built environment, the ergodesign and the emotional design.

Although human perception happens through the senses, this subject has still been little explored. In architecture and interior design, it is difficult to find senses as protagonists. Given the importance of the sense of smell to individuals' emotions, it must be considered that the smell still lacks a significant space in built environment, especially in commercial interior design.

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