ATTRACTING TOURISTS WITH ONLINE SENSORY MARKETING: A CASE OF PAMUKKALE

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Abstract

The senses are one of the most important perception tools. The senses of sight, taste, hearing, touch and smell affect all of individuals' decisions, as well as their preferences, attitudes and understanding of something, and this happens very naturally. Tourism is a concept that is all about the senses. Seeing, tasting, smelling, looking, hearing, and touching are at their most stimulated while traveling or spending time in a destination. Watching the sunset at a destination, smelling the sea, smelling the air, listening to the sound of the waves, touching the stones on the beach, swimming in the sea and feeling that water all over the body, tasting a flavor unique to that destination feel people that they are "alive", "on vacation" and, "taking a break from their traditional lives. Therefore, it is very important for destinations to create marketing tools that appeal to the senses, and to instill those in tourists while they are at the stage of making a travel plan. In this study, websites designed by the tourism authorities of Pamukkale, one of the most popular tourism attractions of Turkey and located in the province of Denizli, are examined within the framework of sensory marketing. In this context, the study is an descriptive content analysis study as how much the content on the online platforms gives place to sensory marketing is determined by the content analysis method and as an overall result, it is concluded that the websites of tourism authorities are not sufficient in terms of reflecting the multisensory aspects of Pamukkale. So, it is suggested that the marketing professionals contribute to these websites' content.

Keywords: *Sensory marketing, senses, Pamukkale, senses in tourism.*

ÇEVRİMİÇİ DUYUSAL PAZARLAMA İLE TURİSTLERİ ÇEKMEK: PAMUKKALE ÖRNEĞİ

Özet

Duyular en önemli algılama araçlarından biridir. Görme, tatma, işitme, dokunma ve koku alma duyuları bireylerin tüm kararlarını, tercihlerini, tutumlarını ve anlayışlarını etkilemekte ve bu çok doğal bir şekilde gerçekleşmektedir. Turizm, tüm duyularla ilgili bir kavramdır. Görme, tatma, koklama, duyma ve dokunma en çok seyahat ederken veya bir destinasyonda vakit geçirirken uyarılmaktadır. Bir sahilde gün batımını izlemek, denizi, havayı koklamak, dalgaların sesini dinlemek, sahildeki taşlara dokunmak, denizde yüzmek ve o suyu tüm bedende hissetmek, o destinasyona özgü bir lezzeti tatmak insanlara "yaşadıklarını", "tatilde olduklarını" ve "geleneksel yaşamlarına ara verdiklerini" hissettiren deneyimlerdir. Bu nedenle destinasyonların duyulara hitap eden pazarlama araçları oluşturması ve bu araçları seyahat planı yapma aşamasındayken turistlere aşılaması çok önemlidir. Bu çalışmada, Türkiye'nin en popüler turizm merkezlerinden biri olan ve Denizli ilinde yer alan Pamukkale'nin turizm otoriteleri tarafından tasarlanan web siteleri duyusal pazarlama çerçevesinde incelenmiştir. Bu bağlamda çalışma, çevrimiçi platformlardaki içeriklerin duyusal pazarlamaya ne kadar yer verdiği içerik analizi yöntemiyle belirlendiği için tanımlayıcı bir içerik analizi çalışmasıdır. Çalışmanın genel sonuçlarından biri turizm otoritelerince hazırlanmış olan web sitelerinin Pamukkale'nin çok taraflı özelliklerini yansıtma açısından yeterli olmadığı sonucuna varılmıştır. Bu nedenle, pazarlama profesyonellerinin bu web sitelerinin içeriğine katkıda bulunmaları önerilmektedir.

Anahtar kelimeler: *Duyusal pazarlama, duyular, pamukkale, turizmde duyular.*

INTRODUCTION

Marketing has become very important today. This is because it has become quite easy for consumers to access products or services. In an increasingly competitive environment due

to globalization and the developments in technology in recent years, especially tourism businesses (İçöz, 2005) and destinations have to differentiate from their competitors in some way and make a difference in the sector.

A marketing type which appeals to customer senses and affects their perceptions, judgments and behaviors, sensory marketing is one of those differentiation strategies. It can be used for creating subconscious impulses qualifying the perception of a customer towards tangibles of a product. Although the sensory marketing approach is used strategically intensively in different sectors, there are not many examples in the tourism sector in the literature in terms of online destination marketing. It is very important for destinations to create marketing tools that appeal to the senses, and to instill those in tourists while they are at the stage of making a travel plan. This is one of the reasons why this research was conducted. In this study, websites designed by the tourism authorities of Pamukkale, one of the most popular tourism attractions of Turkey and located in the province of Denizli, are examined within the framework of sensory marketing. In this context, the study is an descriptive content analysis study.

LITERATURE REVIEW

SENSORY MARKETING

The senses are one of the most important perception tools. The senses of sight, taste, hearing, touch and smell affect all of individuals' decisions, as well as their preferences, attitudes and understanding of something, and this happens very naturally. Sensuality keeps the five senses constantly alert to new textures, seductive smells and flavors, wonderful music and captivating sights. Our senses cooperate to alert us, lift our spirits, and move our minds elsewhere. When stimulated at the same time which is called "multi-sensory experience", the results are unforgettable. The world is experienced through the senses and individuals thus form memories (Roberts, 2010).

Unlike traditional marketing, sensory marketing adds the experiences and emotions of customers to the marketing process. These experiences have not only functional but also sensory, emotional, cognitive, behavioral and logical dimensions. The goal of this marketing approach is to qualify products with their design and packaging, and then to value products in a commercial setting so that they look attractive. In return, customers will act on impulses and emotions rather than logic (Valenti & Riviere, 2008).

Krishna (2012), who is considered the pioneer of the sensory marketing concept, defines the concept as a type of marketing that appeals to the senses of customers and affects their perceptions, judgments and behaviors. From a managerial point of view, the author argues that sensory marketing can be used to create subliminal impulses that characterize customers' perception of the intangible properties of products. In terms of research, sensory marketing is the understanding of sensation and perception in terms of customer behavior. According to Soars (2009), sensory marketing is a type of marketing that focuses on consumer perceptions, starts with stimuli that affect the consumer's senses, and studies how consumers understand, interpret and react to these stimuli.

The subject of sensory marketing, which has been on the agenda for a long time, is the studies to affect one or more of the five senses and to influence the consumer's thought or purchasing decision about a product, and the trend applied today is the increasingly sophisticated research on sensory architecture and its effect on the brand. According to Yüzbaşıoğlu (2013), one of the most striking studies on this subject belongs to the Unilever brand. According to a study for Unilever's soap brand Dove, the impact of the product's scent on sales in North America is $63 million. According to the same research, touch has an effect of $34 million on sales and the image of the product has an effect of $ 14 million. As a result of the research, it is revealed that Dove's perfume makes users feel comfortable, valuable and calm.

The sensory marketing approach greatly increases the influence of the brand on purchasing behavior and builds a strong consumer loyalty. The senses have a strong effect on gaining trust for the brand. Because the senses are triggers for the formation of strong sensory reactions, and this also occurs as a result of the strong influence that the brand has in our lives. This situation, which emerges in memory, creates the bond between the brand and the consumer. Memory and emotions affect the development of good or bad behavior about brands. Marketing through the senses protects the individual's feelings from the attack of information that is not related to the target audience, and ensures that the sensory elements related to the brands settle in the memory. The senses permeate memory because consumers instinctively rely on their senses (Molitor, 2007).

SENSORY MARKETING IN TOURISM

Tourism is a concept that is all about the senses. Seeing, tasting, smelling, looking, hearing, and touching are at their most stimulated while traveling or spending time in a destination. Watching the sunset at a destination, smelling the sea, smelling the air, listening to the sound of the waves, touching the stones on the beach, swimming in the sea and feeling that water all over the body, tasting a flavor unique to that destination feel people that they are "alive", "on vacation" and, "taking a break from their traditional lives. Therefore, it is very important for destinations to create marketing tools that appeal to the senses, and to instill those in tourists while they are at the stage of making a travel plan.

In many ways, the senses are people's biggest and deepest suitcases. Touch, smell, hearing, sight and taste are the five magic tools that happen in a place, at once and form a memory. The most precious moments of travels and experiences are preserved with the senses and this happens completely naturally. For example, the scent of jasmine can remind you of a spa you visit, the sound of a drum may remind you of a festival, soft white sheets may remind you of a five-star hotel and the taste of cardamom may remind you of a cup of tea in an exotic restaurant (Mendiratta, 2010).

The concept "tourist experience" is material and multi-sensory. Therefore, tourism businesses and authorities must pay attention to the sensory content of the promotional messages sent to potential tourists in order to provide the necessary incentives to access the enriched experiences of a place (Pan & Ryan, 2009). The tourist experience encompasses multiple senses and since a successful tourism destination must attract tourists with more than visual stimuli and appeal to all their senses, they must create a portfolio of features that appeal to the senses.

Here are some examples from sensory marketing in tourism industry in terms of destination marketing. Considering Las Vegas, where many movies are shot and an indispensable attraction for tourists all over the world, it is seen that this city, which most people know from movies or magazines, is a perfect example of sensory destination marketing. Each hotel in the city makes great efforts to differentiate itself from the others and makes the biggest investment in visual marketing. One of the best examples of olfactory marketing is the production of the scent of cities. For example, Istanbul currently has a scent. For example, Istanbul has a scent. In fact, there are not only Istanbul, but also Vienna, Budapest, Frankfurt

and Munich. A special fragrance was produced for Istanbul in the series titled "The Scent of Departure". Fragrances, bottles and boxes of perfumes designed by Gerald Ghislain are designed to reveal the identity of Istanbul. Elements such as the energetic and complex scent of the Grand Bazaar, spices, the sea, Turkish delight, historical places such as Topkapı Palace and the Blue Mosque were the inspiration for the fragrance. For Istanbul perfume, grapefruit, bergamot, resin, sweet spices, sandalwood, cinnamon and musk scents are blended. Ghislain has designed a perfume by combining catchy scents about this city (Batı, 2013). In terms of gustative marketing, for example, Tahitians put vanilla in their seafood dishes.

An example of sensory marketing used for destination marketing is the Vienna brochure. The tourist brochure for Vienna has the title "Time Travel for All the Senses". On the cover of the brochure is a young and very modern Viennese young woman posing in front of the Ferris wheel. The young woman is not wearing a local dress, but rather a red tracksuit. Her black hair is messy. Her one hand is on her waist and the other is framing her face. This image is surrounded by other images that are just as opposite to it. There is a crown in one of the pictures, St. Stephen's Cathedral in the other, the third picture is a portrait of Mozart, and on the fourth picture there is a "Vienna awaits you" phrase in attractive handwriting. The point emphasized in all of this is that Vienna has an appeal for all ages and all senses (Howes, 2004).

In Brazil, Sao Paulo Turismo has developed a pioneering project, a "sense map" in which attractive centers are described according to their sensory and emotional characteristics. These attractive centers are determined by a study on the comments of residents and visitors. This map encourages visitors to have sensory experiences and provides a different perspective on the city. The project is updated from time to time according to new comments shared. The project's website offers the opportunity to explore the senses of Sao Paulo with an audiobook. Thus, visitors can, for example, understand the gastronomic characteristics, sound, textures, colors and smells of the public market (Agapito, Valle & Mendes, 2012).

METHODOLOGY

In this study, websites prepared by the tourism authorities of Pamukkale, one of the popular tourism attractions of Turkey and located in the province of Denizli, are examined within the framework of sensory marketing. In this context, the study is based descriptive content analysis study as how much the content (text, photos, music) on the online platforms gives place to sensory marketing is determined by the descriptive analysis method. According

to Yıldırım & Şimşek (2011), descriptive analysis is an analysis approach that includes the steps of processing qualitative data, defining the findings, and interpreting the identified findings, depending on a predetermined framework.

Web search is conducted using the keywords "Pamukkale" and "Pamukkale gov". And websites with .gov url were taken into the sample sites. Both the content in English and in Turkish is analyzed. Turkish content is translated into English during the reporting of the findings. The examined websites belong to The Ministry of Culture and Tourism, Governorship of Denizli, General Directorate of Cultural Heritage and Museums and, the Ministry of Environment, Urbanization and Climate Change.

The text on the websites forms a total of 11-word pages. All the content (text, pictures, music if there is) is analyzed via Nvivo software. Hanson & Grimmer (2007) state that the technological tools used in the analysis of qualitative research would add rigor and objectivity to new marketing ideas. For this reason, NVivo 11 for Windows qualitative data analysis program is used in this study. NVivo qualitative analysis program helps social researchers to review interviews, surveys, field notes, web pages, audio or visual materials and journal articles, and it provides the use of many methods rather than a single methodology (NVivo Guide, 2015). Coding as part of data analysis refers to making connections between data, reducing and simplifying large volumes of cluttered data to generate new concepts and ideas (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). Coding is a specific classification of relevant pieces of text, such as a page, a paragraph, a sentence, or a word. Codes are related to the contents of the coded texts rather than the words and sentences in the text (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The coding is conducted in Nvivo with pre-determined themes: sense of touch, sense of sight, sense of hearing, sense of taste and sense of smell. As touching, smelling, hearing and tasting a website is impossible, just words related to these senses are analyzed. However, in terms of visual aspects, the colors and the photos are examined too.

FINDINGS and DISCUSSION

The findings are reported in parallel with the themes from the literature in order to ease the readability. Therefore, this section is divided into sub-titles as sense of sight (visual marketing), sense of touch (tactile marketing), sense of hearing (auditory marketing), sense of taste (gustative marketing) and sense of smell (olfactory marketing).

Sense of Sight (Visual Marketing)

Firstly, the colors used on the websites are examined because colors, which can affect our emotions more directly (Solomon, 2007), have a great place in visual marketing. While colors and shapes are the first way to define and differentiate a brand (Valenti & Riviere, 2008), they can influence customers' perception of it as well as highlight the most important features associated with that brand (Suhonen & Tengvall, 2009). According to Gobe (2001), if colors are chosen correctly, they can be strategically used to reinforce and convey the desired image for a brand. It is observed that the dominant color used on the websites is white which is regarded as the sign of purity, cleanness and coolness. White is the basic color, as it brings out everything else. For example, in a restaurant, white is used everywhere the customer expects for cleanness (plates, kitchen...). It is revealed as a result of another research that the advertisement messages using the combination of black and white are 78% more memorable (Valenti & Riviere, 2008).

The other significant aspect of the websites in terms of visual marketing, the photos are analyzed. According to Pan & Ryan (2009), mass tourism operators can satisfy their customers by emphasizing the visual senses and taking them to places via images that are pre-selected, packaged and presented to the visitors beforehand, because visual images can be transferred to tourists more easily than other senses. The chosen photos on the websites are mostly larger images with high resolution which could be considered as a positive aspect because photos draw attention more than words and texts. However, as these websites are intended to inform potential visitors and attract them, the texts include information about Pamukkale and these texts are analyzed and coded too.

For example, the descriptions for Pamukkale include positive adjectives (*magnificent, beautiful, pleasant* etc.), metaphors and similes for the embodiment of the destination and for making the place more tangible so that this place could have a better place in people's minds. Below there are quotes from the texts on the websites exemplifying aforementioned observation:

«Limestone tuffs, which are generally white in color and *resemble cotton piles*, form Pamukkale travertines. » (Turkey Culture Portal, 2013b).

«Since water-filled travertines look more *beautiful and pleasant*, their photos are usually taken when they are full of water and they are always thought to be full of water. » (Turkey Culture Portal, 2013b).

«Most of the ruins of Pamukkale Hierapolis Ancient City, standing in all *its glory* right next to Pamukkale Travertines, are from this period. » (Turkey Culture Portal, 2013a).

«You can watch the *magnificent* view of the travertines. » (Turkey Culture Portal, 2013a).

«Do not return without seeing the white travertines, which are *wonders of nature.* » (Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2022).

«The *stunning* white calcium pools, which cling to the side of a ridge, have long been one of the most famous picture postcard views of Turkey. Pamukkale, literally meaning "*cotton castle*" (Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2022).

Other finding with regard to the visual marketing is the words used for feelings of visitors. These words related to the feelings such as "*feeling like something*" might increase the self-awareness and the sense of being-in-the-world (Heidegger).

«We are sure that Pamukkale will fascinate you at first sight. » (Turkey Culture Portal, 2013a).

«Here you can see the statues and other ruins unearthed in the ancient city excavations in Hierapolis and its surroundings. Buildings such as the ancient theatre, temples, monumental fountains, tombs, agora and gymnasium are in such a *good condition* that *you feel like you are in a city of 2,000 years ago*. » (Turkey Culture Portal, 2013a).

Sense of Touch- Tactile Marketing

Although not much research has been done on the effects of tactile stimuli on consumer behavior, it can be said that it is a very important concept based on observations. Sometimes the sensations that come into contact with the skin, such as the winter wind hitting the face, can also determine the mental state of a person (Solomon, 2007). Touch also meets the conscious or subconscious expectations of the consumer in the conceptual dimension. It somehow makes the product more acceptable. The tactility also makes the product unique. In terms of tactile marketing, a brand that satisfies its consumer creates value (Batı, 2013). The same thing is effectual for destinations.

Tactile senses balance the relationship between product experience and judgment. In other words, the individual will always be more sure of what she perceives about that product when she touches it, which is a general judgment (Solomon, 2007). This sense of touch can be considered more important when in water or in an ancient city as visitors desire to feel the warmth of water or the surface of a historical stone which makes that place special for them. On the websites about Pamukkale, there are many indicator words for visitors' feeling the waters by bathing in them, swimming in the ponds and relaxation through massages.

«The pleasure and happiness of swimming in the thermal waters embraced by historical buildings is completely different. » (Turkey Culture Portal, 2013b).

«You too can enter the waters where the people of the ancient world swam thousands of years ago» (Turkey Culture Portal, 2013a).

«They can also enjoy massage, thermal waters and mud baths. » (Turkey Culture Portal, 2013a).

«This area is also famous for its healing waters, which are believed to cure a wide variety of ailments. » (Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2022).

Sense of Hearing- Auditory Marketing

During the analysis, it is seen that there is not any website that use some kind of music for visitors. Nevertheless, sensory features such as music or lighting are used to create atmosphere and thus can affect customer evaluations, stimulations, choices and purchase intentions (Kim & Perdue, 2013). For example, the Mandarin Oriental hotel group uses its own signature music on its website, hotel limousines, telephone systems, some reception cabins and even some rooms (Genuario, 2007).

On the other hand, there are some information regarding the historical and mythological stories about Pamukkale and Hierapolis. This can create an auditory sense of desire for hearing the stories of this place.

«In particular, the stories told about the Ploutonium, which was believed to be the entrance to hell in the Roman Period, will attract your attention. » (Turkey Culture Portal, 2013a).

Sense of Taste- Gustative Marketing

The challenge for tourism authorities is to identify important sensory details, that is, the details that will make them appear in the minds of tourists in a positive way. Managers and marketers should build on the sensory impulses unique to their destinations as the foundation for the travel experience that they want to deliver. For example, food and beverage facilities in a destination may use a specific spice in the dishes they serve to customers, such as Tahitians putting vanilla in their seafood dishes (Mendiratta, 2010). However, there is not any information related to specific tastes and flavors of Denizli within the narratives on the websites. There is only some information indicating the relationship between health and thermal waters referring to sense of taste.

«When drunk warm, it is recommended for stomach spasm, diuretic and inflammations, kidney and sand stones treatment. » (Turkey Culture Portal, 2013b).

Sense of Smell- Olfactory Marketing

Fragrances can stimulate emotions and create a relaxing feeling. They can bring back memories and reduce stress. According to a study, it has been observed that customers who look at flower or chocolate advertisements or are exposed to floral or chocolatey scents spend more time on product information and try different options in each product category (Solomon, 2007). However there isn't found any content related to sense of smell on the websites designed

by national and local tourism authorities. There may be some words appealing to the sense of smell of visitors such as lavender which can be considered as an important feature of Denizli.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Our five main senses can be used as reference points and there are many factors that affect sensory stimulation in a tool of destination marketing such as websites or social media platforms. Visual stimulation is achieved, for example, by colors, artwork and presentation. Sound, music or speech are part of auditory stimulation. Taste stimulation is carried out by the ingredients and flavors in the food and in terms of smell, stimulation is carried out with smells, food, freshness, cleanliness and aromas, and these stimuli can be transferrable through the words and photos on online platforms.

Agapito et al. (2012) emphasize the importance of the sensory relationship between tourists and destinations in their study and state that sensory marketing can be used in design, communication, branding and revitalizing tourist experiences, and as a result, the loyalty of tourists can be gained by providing customer satisfaction. From a managerial point of view, they state that although the experience is individual and internal, it is a concept that can be designed and created by visitors and business managers, so that the experience will gain more value and satisfy the manager.

In this study, websites designed by the tourism authorities of Pamukkale, one of the most popular tourism attractions of Turkey and located in the province of Denizli, are examined within the framework of sensory marketing. Because it is very important for destinations to create marketing tools that appeal to the senses, and to instill those in tourists while they are at the stage of making a travel plan. In this context, the study is an descriptive content analysis study as how much the content on the online platforms gives place to sensory marketing is determined by the content analysis method.

The analysis is conducted on the data on the websites which can be classified as texts, colors and photos. All the texts are coded with open-coding in parallel to the predetermined themes from sensory marketing literature. The findings show that the websites use mostly white as dominant color and wide photos which can be considered as a positive effort. Within the texts, it is seen that mostly there are metaphors, words, similes and adjectives related to sense of sight. The other senses could not be highly appealed through the textual content. As an

overall result, it is concluded that the websites of tourism authorities are not sufficient in terms of reflecting the multisensory aspects of Pamukkale.

This study is conducted on only official websites. It does not include any official social media pages of local or national authorities and this could be considered as a limitation. In terms of that viewpoint, this study presents preliminary research for future studies. Therefore, it is suggested that a more comprehensive study can be done which covers more destinations and businesses; social media pages of national and local tourism authorities can be analyzed. Also, it is hard to give the feeling of senses through just words. That's why, the photos on the websites can be analyzed and may be shown to different group of people from different psychographic or demographic segments in a focus group study and their perceptions and emotions related to the photos can be analyzed.

In terms of practical implications, it is suggested that local authorities can add digital components to their websites such as virtual tours in order to increase visual appeal. More sensory elements can be added into informative texts such as lavender fragrance or some gustative elements. It is also suggested that the marketing professionals contribute to these websites' content. And finally, a sensory map of Pamukkale or Denizli can be drawn including unique elements like lavender fields as a component of olfactory marketing although according to Gobe (2001), most of the customers are not aware of the sensory stimuli they receive, but the destinations and businesses or brands must know and understand the effects of the stimuli they are offering to their customers very well.

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