

## Senses in Hospitality: How Do Hotels Appeal to Them?

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### Abstract

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Sensory marketing is one of the modern marketing approaches which has been used in various sectors for a long time. It has been applied in tourism industry, too, especially in destination and hotel marketing. Hospitality sector is very appropriate for sensory marketing applications, even though the fact that there are not many hotels which use this approach in their marketing policies. The purpose of this study is to explore and reveal sensory marketing applications in 5-Star hotels operating in Bodrum, Mugla. With the method of complete sampling, all the hotels were included in this study. In this qualitative study, the methods applied for data collection were interview, observation and document analysis. The data were collected via a question form for interviews, field notes and photos taken through observations at the hotels and analyzed with a qualitative analysis software program. As a result, it was determined that sensory marketing applications appealing to guests' senses were being used at the hotels in Bodrum; visual marketing was the one used mostly at the hotels among other sensory marketing types; though the majority of the hotels did not apply these sensory practices strategically, the rest using this marketing approach in a strategic and planned way got many positive feedbacks from their customers.

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**Keywords:** Marketing, Sensory Marketing, Hospitality Sector, Five Star Hotels

### 1. Introduction

Since consumers can reach products so easily, marketing has become a very important issue. Many businesses especially the ones operating in service industry like hotels or restaurants have to differentiate themselves from their competitors and make a difference within the industry in such a competitive environment because of globalization and recent technological advancements.

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With regard to its share in employment rate and economy in recent years, service industry has developed at a distinguishable rate among other industries. Especially for the last 30 years, it has shown a fast progress (Icoz, 2005; Kilic and Eleren, 2010). These kinds of businesses can reflect their differences primarily on their marketing strategies. As there is a fast increase in consumption today, marketing strategies to be used for influencing upon the perceptions, preferences and attitudes of consumers have to be different and modern, too. Thus, businesses operating in service industry can be in harmony with today's world. In consequence, sensory marketing that is considered as a branding method and a part of experiential marketing has become more important.

Although sensory marketing approach is applied intensely in a strategic way in different sectors, there are not many examples in tourism literature and that is one of the reasons why this study is done. As there is not any study on sensory marketing in tourism literature, it is considered appropriate to study on a small sample like Bodrum at first. However, sensory marketing is a topic which, if expanded, can be researchable within the scope of destinations.

The purpose of this study is to explore and reveal sensory marketing applications in 5-Star hotels and the opinions of hotel/department managers about sensory marketing.

## **1. Conceptual Framework**

### **1.1. Sensory Marketing**

Each one of the senses can stimulate powerful memories and emotions that can change simple or grand decisions. The more senses one business appeals in a positive way, the more chances it creates in selling the products (Boyle-Brayfield, 2008). For this reason, more and more businesses use stimuli like fragrances, music or textures in order to establish stronger bonds with customers (Dixon, Stone and Zednickova, 2013). Sensory stimuli contribute to the experience and the theme of a business. Thus, the experience can be stronger and unforgettable (Bati, 2013). Unlike traditional marketing, sensory marketing adds customer experiences and emotions into marketing process. Not just functional, there are sensory, cognitive, emotional, behavioral and sensible dimensions of these experiences.

The aim of this marketing approach is to provide sufficiency of products with their designs and packaging and then to assess them in a commercial place in order to make them look attractive. In turn, customers act on their instincts and feelings instead of their reason (Valenti and Riviere, 2008).

Considered as the pioneer of sensory marketing concept, Krishna (2012) defines the concept as a marketing type which appeals to customer senses and affects their perceptions, judgments and behaviors. She claims that in terms of a managerial viewpoint, sensory marketing can be used for creating subconscious impulses qualifying the perception of a customer towards tangibles of a product; in terms of research, sensory marketing refers to the understanding and treatment of sensations and perceptions with regard to customer behaviors.

According to Soars (2009) sensory marketing is a marketing approach that focuses on consumer perceptions, starts from stimuli affecting consumer senses, works on how consumers understand, interpret and react to these stimuli. The purpose of sensory marketing strategies is to differentiate and express the identity of a product, service or a business in terms of human mind and sense. The reason for a business to develop sensory marketing strategies is to separate its brand from its competitors especially in case of the equality between price and quality. Therefore, sensory marketing strategies are based on emotional and psychological attributes rather than functional attributes in determining the identity and values of a brand. Another purpose of sensory marketing strategies is to facilitate multisensory brand experience conceived by sensors, sensations and sensory statements related to five sense organs (Hulten, 2011).

To sum up, sensory marketing is a field studying on the understanding of the place of sensations and perceptions in marketing (Krishna, 2012). When consumers are affected by sensory stimuli, their loyalty to a business increases, their relationships with the business strengthen and the bond between a consumer and a business tightens (Suhonen and Tengvall, 2009).

## **1.2. Hospitality Sector and Sensory Marketing**

Today's hotels not only reflect how people live in cities, travel the world, work, integrate with nature, but also improve their imaginations.

Modern hotels do not only refer to a place to sleep; they offer escape for their guests with their design, view or other opportunities. Staying at a hotel does not mean booking a clean and comfortable room. Hotels represent more than that. Staying at a hotel is an experience, an event or an organization of itself. Now hotels become destinations and their purpose is to make their guests have an ultimate hotel experience (Klumbis, 2002).

Five senses can be used as reference points for this reason, at hotels and there are many factors stirring sensory stimulation. Visual stimulation occurs through factors like lighting, art works, decoration and presentation. Olfactory stimulation occurs through smells, food, freshness, cleanliness and flavors. Sound, music, silence, background music or conversations among people are the parts of auditory stimulation. Gustative stimulation happens through ingredients of dishes and flavors (Klumbis, 2002). In their study, Agapito, Valle and Mendes (2012) emphasize the importance of sensory relationship between tourists and destinations and state that sensory marketing can be used in design, communication, branding and reviving tourist experiences and at the end tourists' loyalty can be provided with customer satisfaction.

Hotels and restaurants try to create a certain atmosphere in each one of sensory spaces and to affect customer senses. If stimulating factor is equal to or higher than customer expectations, customers leave the place in a satisfied way (Klumbis, 2002). As now consumer loyalty is more important than ever, the descriptive results of this study can present some practical implications and examples for tourism industry.

## **2. Methodology**

The main research problem is "Are there any sensory marketing applications used on purpose and strategically or unintentionally in 5-Star hotels operating in Bodrum? If there are, what kind of sensory marketing activities is being used?" In parallel to this question, the main objective of this study is to explore and reveal different techniques and applications used in hospitality sector appealing to consumer senses. For this purpose, sensory marketing approach is addressed in this study from the viewpoints of hotel/department managers within the frame of accommodation facilities.

Since this research helps reveal to what extent 5-Star hotels apply sensory marketing for differentiating themselves in Bodrum, an important tourism destination where competition between hotels is fierce, it is significant for tourism industry. Also, as there are not many studies about sensory marketing applications used in tourism and accommodation facilities (Isacsson et al., 2009: 168), this study is expected to fill this gap within the literature.

In accordance with the purpose, a qualitative research is conducted. After a long term literature review, it is concluded that a qualitative approach is more appropriate to this research because the studies on relevant topics are not found sufficient to answer the problem and questions of this research.

The sample of this study is the hotel/department managers of 28 five star hotels which have tourism operation licenses (a legal permit given by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism in Turkey) in Bodrum. As in qualitative research generalization is out of the question, this sample has just got a guidance value. The process of getting an appointment from hotel managers and demanding an interview was really challenging. For this reason, 22 hotel/department managers were interviewed, but the first two interviews were considered as pilot study and were not included in the analyses, therefore the number of respondents remained as 20.

In this study, the methods of interview, observation and document analysis were implemented as data collection tools. Before or after the interviews of this study, we made observations related to sensory marketing and took down some notes which is the method used usually in the studies based on observation (Yildirim and Simsek, 2011). This falls into the category of structured observation in natural environment (Bailey, 1982). Another method of data collection applied in this study was document analysis. Within the scope of document analysis, the photos and notes taken down during observations and websites of the hotels were analyzed for the purpose of supporting other data.

A semi structured interview form was developed after literature reviews under the guidance of studies of Valenti and Riviere (2008), Krishna (2012) and Lindstrom (2007). In the semi structured interview form, open-ended questions were asked. In the first two pilot interviews, the question form was improved and modified.

The process of data collection lasted between May 2015 and September 2015. The authors got appointments from managers by phone calls and then went to the hotels to make interviews. The interviews which lasted almost 45-60 minutes were recorded via a voice recorder. Hanson and Grimmer (2007) state that technological tools used in the analysis of qualitative research can add accuracy and objectivity into new marketing ideas. For this reason, a qualitative data analysis software program, NVivo 11 for Windows was used in this research.

During open coding, all the texts such as interview documents and field notes was coded line by line. After this process, it was determined how the findings would be revealed. The findings were determined and explained with regard to codes.

### 3. Findings

As warm-up questions, the respondents were asked to give some information about the hotels and themselves. All the respondents were undergraduate, most of them were male and between the ages of 30-40. The majority of the hotels had almost 200-300 rooms, rendered all-inclusive service. Just the 6 of hotels operated in half board system. Some part of the hotels appealed to the families with children, the other part appealed to the individuals at the age of 35-40. Although most of the hotels seemed like operating for a season, the respondents stated that they were trying to be open for 12 months. Even though all the hotels were located in Bodrum, their regular markets were different than each other. However according to word query analysis, Netherlands and Belgium were the mostly mentioned countries by the respondents.

After general attributes of hotels, the answers of respondents to the questions "Can you describe your hotel with three words?" and "Why guests should prefer this hotel?" were analyzed. The word used at most among the words qualifying the hotels was "service." The other words highlighted than 'service' were also significant for this study. These were the words 'sea' and 'peace'. After warm up questions, the respondents were asked about the research topic. Food and Beverage Manager of Hotel No. 19 answered this question as follows:

*"Although I don't have a full knowledge of sensory marketing as a term, but when I think about it, it is totally related to our job. I am one of the people at the head of a department appealing to five senses." (R19)*

The respondent from hotel No. 15 that belonged to a chain hotel group and was qualified as “design hotel” by the respondent was the only one who knew the term. While making the interview, one of the guests staying at the hotel came towards the respondent who was the general manager and stated that the hotel seemed like an art gallery and she was very affected by decoration and the ambiance. The respondent expressed that the hotel group would considerably care about art and artists and told how sensory marketing could be applied:

*“We are making some rooms that we call Mockup. In this Mockup thing we are making the simulation of what we really want to do and then we experience it. I mean we go and sleep in that room. Let’s see how is the room at night or in the evening? How do you feel when you wake up? Or how do you feel when you touch the clothing? What happens when you touch with your hands? Is there any lack of visual harmony in the room? We have the opportunity to test all these things and so we have been actually doing this kind of things in hospitality sector for a decade. I know that some of the architecture firms abroad work with sociologists and psychologists but what kind of studies they are doing exactly, I don’t know. But for example we have a Singaporean architecture firm and I know that the executive of the firm is supported by academics about this topic.” (R15)*

One of the respondents admitted that for applying sensory marketing strategically, the hotel would be a facility hosting less number of guests like boutique hotels:

*“This is an all-inclusive facility. Now, usually boutique hotels have some applications to make guests feel special. As we operate in all-inclusive system, we have fixed applications. When a honeymoon room is booked, all the honeymoon rooms are serviced in the same way... We don’t have any special thing. Because our hotel is all-inclusive.” (R2)*

### **3.1. The Findings about Sensory Marketing Applications in the Hotels**

For revealing these findings, a model was developed via NVivo 11. The concept of sensory marketing was divided into subgroups, child nodes as visual, auditory, olfactory, gustative and tactile marketing. Visual marketing and gustative marketing were divided into another child node. While there were colors, Bodrum concept/ Bodrum atmosphere and outdoors under visual marketing node, there were signature dish and a la carte under gustative marketing node.

### 3.1.1. Visual Marketing

Majority of the respondents emphasized that visual aspects in the hotels were very significant and admitted that visual marketing was the application used at most in their hotels. It was observed that in the Hotel No. 1 there was an application of "Lady in Red" which referred to a woman guest relations employee in red suit welcoming and giving guests a tour after they checked in the hotel. It was also observed that in the Hotel No. 6 there was a red carpet on which guests had to walk before they checked in the hotel. Except colors, there were other visual aspects determined by hotels and used in their brands. For example, Hotel No. 11 expressed with a precious stone in its logo that it was a luxury hotel and appealed to upper segment guests. Another respondent said that they tried to stick in the minds of guests with their hotel logo and to do it by putting this logo everywhere guests could see:

*"We highlight our logo. For example there is one in the entrance. There is another one when you look from this side. Also you can see one from the front. We emphasize logo more to stick in minds of consumers." (R7)*

The respondent in Hotel No. 15 stated that their hotel chain tried to constitute an art lover image for guests by using various works of art and to attract upper class guests.

*"One of the most important things for our group is supporting art. That's why in all our hotels there is absolutely something related to art." (R15)*

In some hotels, special design rooms were mentioned. While some rooms at Hotel No. 18 were pretty normal and simple, suite rooms were designed with Ottoman concept and the most remarkable feature of these rooms was the Ottoman style pomp. The aim of the hotel with these rooms was hosting upper class guests there.

*"There are some rooms; our rooms in the Ottoman style... There are suite rooms adorned with authentic Ottoman design." (R18)*



The hotels located in the center of Bodrum tried to strengthen their visual aspects with their views and reflected this with some applications like panoramic restaurants.

*“Being near the sea, having two beaches and our main restaurant are how we address visual memory. The restaurant is on the sixth floor. You can’t find any other restaurant on the sixth floors. In hotels the restaurants are usually either on the first floor or at the pool side.” (R5)*

A respondent admitted that the hotel employees were also included in visual marketing of the hotels:

*“For example, visually we are very careful about the physical characteristics of our employees.” (R8)*

Another important point emphasized by the respondents in terms of visual marketing was Bodrum concept/Bodrum atmosphere. For this reason, this title was analyzed as a child node separately. Findings about visual marketing showed that the hotels chose their colors, landscape and materials in accordance with Bodrum ambiance. In other words, it was observed that blue and white which was signature colors of Bodrum houses and known as Bodrum colors and the flowers like paper flowers found in density in Bodrum were used in a lot of places in the hotels. The respondents also stated their ideas about this:

*“We are using blue and white colors usually; they are suitable because it is suitable for Bodrum concept. . . In seafood restaurant, wood is used; blue and white are heavily seen there. Even the runners on the tables are blue, the blue of Bodrum houses. . . I am aware that white calms down people. The reason why people want Bodrum is that some areas are very peaceful. At certain points, people are having fun. Look they go and enjoy in city center but they always come back to a peaceful place. Because there isn’t any apartments there. Because this place is completely white.” (R2)*

\* \* \*

*“The architecture of this facility was designed appropriate to Bodrum atmosphere, I mean Bodrum architecture. White and turquoise are heavily used in this facility. We use also these colors on our logo. As white prevails Bodrum, in our facility, in both our rooms and lobby and also in other parts white and turquoise are dominant in architecture.” (R3)*

\* \* \*

*"We designed our landscapes completely in accordance with the Bitez Valley. We are using Bodrum mandarins, olives and lavender; all the symbols of Bodrum." (R13)*

\* \* \*

*"In common areas and pool sides we prefer white mostly. Because it is the color of Bodrum." (R17)*

It was observed that the hotels used Bodrum concept also outdoors and in common areas. For example, in the gardens with palm trees and paper flowers, blue and white were used dominantly in the pool sides and on sunbeds or beach umbrellas around the pools. It was also observed that most of the buildings were stone buildings appropriate to Bodrum and Aegean architecture. Stating that they tried to reflect blue and green of Bodrum in hotel areas, the respondents admitted that they cared about integrating with nature.

*"We use colors like beige or brown, we are in the nature anyway. We live in this facility with every hue of green. We have a beautiful garden. There are flowers with various colors in the garden. Fuchsia, white and red... As we are within the nature, we choose colors without withdrawing from nature, especially in common areas of course." (R14)*

### **3.1.2. Auditory Marketing**

Most of the respondents said that they did not have any special application but DJs in animation crew and entertainment managers decided music style and songs playing on the beaches, pool sides or in the lobbies. They also admitted that there was not any special purpose of these choices and the decisions were made according to hour of the day, the average age of customers and their nationalities. For example, 5th Respondent explained as follows:

*"There are some activities in the morning by pool side, the teenagers are having fun there. That's why more popular music is playing there... If the Polish guests are many in the group, Polish music is playing and if Turkish guests are much more than others, Turkish music is playing." (R5)*

Nonetheless, in general the statements of respondents were similar to the thought that in a lobby soft and slow music was playing; by a pool side or on a beach more popular and energetic music was playing and in restaurants, music in harmony with concepts of the restaurants was playing.

*“A little bit more relaxing music is playing in the lobby and common areas. We are using calming songs. I don’t talk about pool side because animation crew is doing different things there. Different dinner songs are playing during dinner.” (R6)*

In two hotels, the respondents claimed to work with a music styling company for auditory marketing. One of them shared his opinions as follows:

*“To tell the truth, this task was assigned to the taste of food and beverage directors before. I know because I have done this for years. It was up to us. A food and beverage director used to say that this kind of music would be playing during breakfast, this during lunch and this during dinner. And then we realized that this isn’t something like that... But it is something professional to follow new trends or what people like. So we hired consultants. We started to get support from professional DJs. We also hired private companies doing this job for specifically hotels. For example, the one is a Canadian company operating in London which has a website, musicstyling.com. We learn from their professional knowledge during what hours what kinds of music should be played in our hotels. They are coming to our hotel and we introduce our hotel and guest profile to them. And after these, they send us to a demo and say ‘this music is suitable for you’ but these people are professional DJs or sound engineers.” (R15)*

Some respondents answered this question in a different way than others:

*“We had a song made for us which describes us. I wrote the lyrics. Yes I wrote about our hotel. We consider playing it while welcoming guests or on our phone calls or on our website.” (R7)*

\* \* \*

*“When you enter the room, you hear the song composed by a singer named Sa Ding Ding. That song is playing in all our rooms. It is specific to our hotel. For example they are asking who the singer is because the song plays constantly and therefore they are asking about the singer. ‘Is there any other songs of her? Can we listen to them? Can we find on Youtube? Can we buy her CD?’ There are feedbacks like that.” (R10)*

Indeed there was another hotel which used a similar application:

*“We have a pool side song specific to us but I can’t remember the name of the song right now (humming the song) but our repeat guests have been recording for years. They do it to remember their holiday here and to feel the holiday mood for a while.” (R12)*

In some hotels within a chain, there was a standard outside broadcast for music applications:

*"Within the standards of hotel, there is music given via an outside broadcast. We don't use any other application. The music chosen from the arranged broadcast is spread to all the areas within the hotel at specific hours." (R10).*

Two respondents confessed that their hotels "failed on this issue". They stated that they were having problems about auditory applications:

*"We totally fail in this issue. Because I think there is nothing done consciously about it. Some music is playing in some places of the hotel but how appropriate the music is I don't know. They are always the choices of a DJ. Because music is demanded usually from the DJ. I mean the managers say to the DJ to make some music and they play all day long." (R11)*

### **3.1.3. Tactile Marketing**

The answers of the questions on tactile marketing generally included the cloth of couches or armchairs, curtains and bed linings. The majority of respondents admitted that they used mostly straw material for chairs or tables etc. and the reason for using straw was that the material was associated with Bodrum:

*"Rather than hard furnishing or covers we use straw. It feels softer when you touch it or sit on it. We associate it with Aegean. We tried to add softness." (R1)*

In some hotels, it was observed that hardwearing materials from which stains could be removed easily were used because of concerns about cost and this thought was confirmed by the respondents.

Even though materials like leather, velvet or satin were associated with luxury at first glance, the observations proved the otherwise. While leather, velvet and satin were used in the all-inclusive hotels of which room prices were lower, linen, straw or cotton were used in the hotels of which room prices were higher.

*"Now we are trying not to use leather in common areas. Because there can be some serious problems about sweating... We use cotton upholstery outdoor. For example especially our bed linings are special fabric. One hundred percent cotton. They are not mixed with satin. Beds are important for comfort of guests. When he puts his head on the pillow, he should be comfortable. When he puts his head on the pillow, he should sleep. His bed linings should be clean and not itchy... Of course sense of touch is important too. We use cotton cloth as much as we can." (R8)*

Another hotel which applied a common tactile marketing strategy with other hotels within the group was Hotel No. 10 which was a member of an international chain hotel. The respondent expressed that wherever a member hotel was, the concept of Far East was still dominant in all the hotels and they used wood and linen very much in Bodrum. This situation was also valid in terms of visual marketing. The manager of a hotel which settled conscious strategies for tactile marketing stated his opinions as follows:

*"One of the things we care about the cloth is that they are all organic materials. We care so much about human health." (R15)*

The respondents gave examples from clothes or materials used within the concept of tactile marketing. As they were situated in Bodrum, which made them resort hotels, their common purpose was to make guests feel comfortable in all aspects.

#### **3.1.4. Olfactory Marketing**

It was found out by the responses of respondents that the majority of the hotels did not have any special strategy related to olfactory marketing; they used some air fresheners produced specifically for hotels by big perfume companies and the essence of these fresheners was generally lavender. The reason for "lavender" was explained as making guests feel "fresh", relaxed and rested.

*"We usually work with a special perfume company. We prefer fresh perfumes in hotel areas... We are trying to figure this out by relaxing and soothing smells especially in spas and other common areas." (R8)*

Some respondents admitted to prefer fragrances with citrus fruit essence as their hotels were located in Bodrum. It was observed that while in the lobbies or other common areas citrus fruit smells were used, lavender perfumes were sprayed into the rooms.

*"We are trying to bring local features forward about this issue... at the beginning of the season, in our rooms, mandarin or citrus fruit smells are used because they belong to Bodrum. It is one of the characteristics of Bodrum. That's why we choose local odors." (R11)*

\* \* \*

*"In common areas we use the smell of Bodrum lemon, not only lemon actually but also citrus fruit. You can call it satsuma. The classical lemon flower of Bodrum. You can feel their smell in our bathrooms especially." (R15)*

In general, it was observed that flowers were heavily used in the entrances or in the lobbies of hotels. A respondent admitted that the smell of those flowers attracted the attention of guests, too:

*"The smell of orange flower, the smell of Bodrum is sprayed from the reception bench. One time as soon as a guest entered, I forgot her name but she said 'I loved this smell.' This smell sticks into mind." (R19)*

\* \* \*

*"We are giving orange fragrance in the entrance for its freshness. I don't know, have you smelled it? It has a timing... We apply either the smell of lemon flower or orange smell in the lobby. But there isn't any smell application in the rooms." (R20)*

There were two hotels in which olfactory marketing was applied strategically and the respondents knew about the term. One of these two respondents said that they started to spray jasmine perfume because they tried to create a fragrance associated with their brand and their purpose was to be remembered by guests with this fragrance. She also admitted that they used this fragrance not only in one place but also in all the materials used in the hotel such as soaps, shampoos and cleaning supplies in order to set integration in olfactory marketing through branding. During the hotel tour after interview, the researcher also smelled the fragrance. The respondent explained this process as follows:

*"We want to leave a fragrance associated with us on the nose of the guest so that whenever he smells it, he remembers this hotel... By integrating the brand with this smell, we try to give this perception to them. We started to use jasmine fragrance in all over the hotel and also in soaps, shampoos and cleaning supplies." (R1)*

The other respondent stated that a special fragrance was given into ventilation system in the hotel:

*"We work with various perfume companies and then we include this perfumes into the ventilation. In many hotels, some fragrance is given into air conditioning and ventilation systems... We have lavender kind of odors here. But in common areas we use the smell of Bodrum lemon." (R15)*

One of the respondents reflected a different viewpoint and said these:

*"Of course we have air fresheners for rooms. When people enter in a place, a room, the smell in the air is the first sense giving hints about the cleanliness of that place... Of course the sensitive people are important in this issue. We can't use these smells in big amounts. A guest may be allergic to some smells. So, for example a Turkish guest may love the smell of lavender in a room but a foreign guest may say 'Why did you spray this smell without asking me?' So we try to care about this issues and use smells at trace amounts." (R5)*

About odors in restaurants and bars, a respondent stated that the smell of coffee was highlighted in their hotel:

*"The first thing I did was removing this grinder coffee... I put coffee beans instead, started to try drip coffee for its smell. This is among the tricks of this job." (R13)*

As the 19th Respondent was the manager of Food and Beverage Department, he responded to this question in a different way and gave some detailed information:

*"The kitchen has a unique smell. The perfume of a kitchen is garlic. For example we use it special dinners and special shows. Especially when wine and pepper meets in Italian restaurant, a good odor spreads... We also use coffee beans. Because of grinding phase, the smell of coffee spreads too. We don't use any special odors in restaurants. Because some people may be allergic to some odors, to be honest. We want the smell of dishes to be emitted especially of sauced dishes. There is not a French restaurant but when we make shrimps with butter and garlic in Italian, Seafood or Aegean restaurants, the smell comes through and spreads all over the place. Because we use an amazing flavor." (R19)*

### 3.1.5. Gustative Marketing

Most of the respondents mentioned about their cuisines and a la carte restaurants. But some of them admitted that they offered food and beverages associated with their hotels and they aimed at branding in this way. Most of the respondents expressed that they cared about Turkish cuisine; they paid attention to offer especially local food of Bodrum or Aegean Region and they would like to stick in guests' minds in this way. On the other hand, considering that their guest profile consisted of various nationalities, they gave place to international cuisines, too.

Some respondents implied that all their food and beverages included a lot of dishes from international cuisines and this application made them different among other hotels:

*"I'm sure that in no other open buffet, dishes like lobster, quail meat, rabbit meat or goose meat are served. We have these everyday so we can say that our kitchen is successful. I am sure some guests come again just to eat these." (R7)*

\* \* \*

*"Our kitchen produces international dishes. We prefer to make dishes that can appeal to every taste as much as we can. We create menus appealing to everyone." (R14)*

The 9th Respondent stated that some special nights were organized in the hotel and for this special days or nights, they served special or authentic food and tried to impress their guests:

*"In Turkish nights, the dishes served are mostly from Turkish cuisine. They are special because they are hard to make at home such as stuffed turkey, stuffed lamb ribs or meat doner. I mean the special food for us is being served. Not just Turkish cuisine, we also have for example Italian guests, French and German guests in our guest profile. We also plan menus appealing to their tastes. In this way, Turkish guests would be introduced with their food cultures. They meet foreign guests in special concept nights. Therefore a transculturation occurs." (R9)*

The 15th Respondent asserted that they cared so much about food and beverages but they mostly preferred to present their guests traditional examples of Turkish cuisine:



*"I used to work as food and beverage manager. Now because of this, the food and beverages are especially important to me even if I have become general manager. We attach importance to our traditions, our values. So we try to keep them alive. We describe our hotel as the traditional representative of Turkish cuisine." (R15)*

Some food and beverages that helped hotels in the way of branding were called as signature dishes by the respondents. One of them defined the term as follows:

*"We have a signature dish application that I show you on the menu for reminding guests of us. In our hotel, almost in every outlet some food and some drink become our signature. As signatures are unique, we choose a product by which they can remember us. We want to present the things they can't see anywhere else in a catchy way." (R1)*

In the Hotel No. 1, the signature dish was cokertme kebab which meant in English the sliced steak served on a bed of finger fried potatoes. This choice showed that a specific dish of Bodrum was preferred to be the signature dish. In the other hotels choosing special food similar to this one mentioned above, the respondents' responses were as follows:

*"Our chef makes wonderful tandoori and cokertme kebab which belong to Mugla cuisine. Our chef has a master's degree in those dishes." (R8)*

\* \* \*

*"For example I put a lot of modern food among others in the menu but I don't take out the cokertme kebab of Bodrum. People like to see it and eat it. And it is something special for this region. That's why we are trying to protect it." (R15)*

While some of the respondents thought that there was not any need of branding with local food as mentioned above, because producing food appealing to tastes of hotel guests in the best way was more useful, two of them explained why they could not make a sensorial difference:

*"No we don't have anything special in the restaurants. Because you have to appeal to every segment. I don't think a kebab named after a hotel is attractive. It is very hard to focus on a dish. Everybody has different tastes and there aren't sufficient resources to appeal all of them in all-inclusive facilities." (R5)*

\* \* \*

*"As the hotel is an all-inclusive facility, we don't have the opportunity to serve some special food unfortunately. We can say that there isn't any special food in our hotel." (R6)*

### **3.1.6. Multi-Sensory Marketing Applications**

Although the findings about sensory marketing concept were scrutinized one by one according to the questions in the interview form, sensory attributes were sometimes applied together which meant that two or more senses could be appealed at the same time and this multi-sensory applications could be done more easily in hospitality sector.

The most important factor that could be examined within the scope of both gustative and visual marketing was the presentation of foods. A respondent emphasized that the presentation had substantial effects on marketing and fulfilling the expectations of guests was the most important point in hospitality:

*"Now they are sharing on Instagram and saying 'I am drinking a wonderful margarita prepared by Bodrumlemon' and taking many photos... Our aim is to meet their food and beverage needs just like in their dreams." (R19)*

One of the most significant examples of multi-sensory marketing applications was spas. It was observed in the spas that the senses of sight, smell and hearing were all addressed there. The glaring visual attributes of the spa in Hotel No. 10 were spa products of the hotel brand (oils, perfumes and creams), flowers on the tables (white orchids and ikebana) and dim yellow lighting. The place was smelling lavender incense and silence prevailing the spa was remarkable. The respondent told about this issue as follows:

*"Our spa is very important to us. Because all of our guests come here and we want them to be really relaxed when they leave. That's why we use the products produced with the hotel name and sent from the main office. Guests can buy those products if they want. We tried to create a different spa with its smell, visual elements and its quietness." (R10)*

The 3rd Respondent mentioned about traditional stone oven in the hotel's main restaurant. This oven was in the restaurant, not in the kitchen and it attracted to attention of guests because of its appearance and the smells coming from it.

*“We have a beautiful stone oven. Guests are taking photos in front of it... For now, we can only use it for pastry but in near future we start to make different dishes, too... The smell of pastry while baking is inviting guests to the restaurant.” (R3)*

Indeed materials which could be evaluated in terms of tactile marketing were important to visual marketing too, because the hotels using wood, linen, straw or iron looked more resort and the hotels using mostly leather, satin or velvet seem like business hotels. On the other hand, for example the visual effect of a velvet chair and the feeling when touched could be considered as an example of multi-sensory marketing applications.

#### **4. Results and Discussion**

First of all, majority of respondents are male, between the ages 35- 40 and work in executive positions. All the respondents are undergraduate. The hotels within the sample have average 200- 300 rooms. Most of the hotels operate in an all-inclusive system. Almost half of them address to families with kids, while the rest address to individuals or couples between the ages of 35- 40. Even though some hotels remain in operation for 4-5 months in a year, all of the hotels try to stay open all year round. As for guest profile, in spite of the fact that all the hotels are located in Bodrum, the nationalities of their guests are different than each other. However after the analyses, Belgium and Holland stand out among the others.

The opinions of hotel/department managers towards sensory marketing concept are summarized after the analyses. As the respondents in the study of Valenti and Riviere (2008), the respondents of this research claim not to know the term through the word's meaning but they give their opinions about what it can mean. Some of them ask the researcher to explain the term.

After explanation, there are some respondents claiming to apply sensory marketing in a strategic and conscious way, as well as the respondents who admit that they do not apply because it increases cost and is a challenging marketing approach to be used in the all-inclusive hotels with so many rooms. It is observed that the respondents claiming to use it strategically represent a chain hotel. However as in the study of Valenti and Riviere (2008), the respondents accept that appealing to five senses through marketing is a significant factor for general customer satisfaction.

According to responses about visual applications, it is revealed that the type of sensory marketing which is used at most in the hotels is visual marketing. This result supports the study of Lindstrom (2007) who shows that the most important sense addressed in marketing is the sense of sight (58 %) which is followed by smell (45 %), hearing (41%), taste (31 %) and touch (25%). The respondents express the colors used primarily in their hotels and state that these colors have mostly been chosen by interior architectures.

In their studies, Amorntatkul and Pahome (2011) and Agapito et al. (2012) find that the colors are the mostly used elements of visual marketing in service industry. One of the results of this research is that hotels choose colors appropriate to Bodrum which is explained by the respondents as Bodrum concept with their own words. These colors of Bodrum concept are mainly white, blue or turquoise and green. During the observations, it is seen that the colors beige, turquoise and white are used in the rooms while outside of the hotels white and blue are used and hotels arrange their landscapes in harmony with Bodrum which means that they use pink paper flowers and green palm trees to add color into white. Luxury hotels use stone color or blue, white, green, brown specific to nature and Bodrum while the hotels addressing middle class families use more flamboyant colors. As blue refers to calmness and relaxation (Solomon, 2007) and peace; white refers to purity, cleanliness; green refers to nature, the application of these colors heavily by the majority of hotels operating in Bodrum makes sense, because managers want guests to feel relaxed and find peace in Bodrum where an escape experience can be provided.

According to Valenti and Riviere (2008), a lot of brands are associated with only one color and stick in the minds of customers with that color. Hotel No. 17 proves this claim and shows that by using only one color, they manage to appeal to a certain nationality of people, a target market. Similarly the 9th Respondent admits that they appeal to domestic market by using the colors of Turkish flag on the employees' uniforms. Another example of this strategy can be seen in Taj Hotels in which women employees are wearing sari and displaying a traditional image (Mendiratta, 2010). Hotel No. 15 separating from others within the sample as a design hotel differentiates itself with works of art and hand made products while the hotels located in the city center demand to become prominent with their views of Bodrum.

As indicated by Suhonen and Tengvall (2009) in their study, among the factors affecting a business visually, there are logos, designs, colors and lighting. In this research, some respondents claim that they highlight their logos and for this, they put their logos everywhere guests can see.

Within the scope of auditory marketing, the music used in the hotels changes according to the places. For example, in lobby or in the main restaurant slow or soothing music is playing while by poolside or on the beach more popular and energetic music is chosen. Many respondents admit that music is chosen by DJs within the animation crew about which Gobe (2001) states that employing a DJ is closely related to brand personality and brand attitude. Some respondents claim that music is chosen by executive managers while some respondents admit to work with private music styling companies. Three of the respondents say that they have songs composed for their hotels and they receive positive feedback from the guests about these songs. Unlike this research, in a sensory marketing related study done by Ditoiu, Stancioiu, Bratucu, Onişor and Botoş (2014) the most important auditory aspect is determined as silence.

Within the scope of tactile marketing, data are obtained about bed linings, textures of clothes, the materials used in chairs, armchairs, couches in the lobbies or rooms. In the most of the hotels, straw or wood materials are used and in some of them leather, velvet or linen materials are used. The respondents admit that they care so much about the factors affecting sleep quality such as pillows, bed linings or blankets as the guests need to relax and get rest in the hotels they spend their vacation.

One of the results is that despite the fact that clothes like velvet, satin or leather are associated with luxury, as they are resort hotels, luxury hotels choose clothes that are soft, and make a guest feel comfortable rather than flamboyant upholstery. One of the respondents states that they prefer to use organic clothes at the request of guests. Solomon (2007) thinks that clothes which are made of rare materials or processed to be softer are more expensive and therefore they are considered to be appealing to upper class segment. A respondent admits that while purchasing new clothes for the hotel, they are tried and experienced by the employees at first.

This application is aimed at preventing guests from negative experiences and avoiding negative feedback of guests. It is also deduced that hotels do not spend as much money on tactile marketing as on auditory marketing. Some hotels hire private music engineering companies for music choice in the hotels but do not choose clothes or materials in a special way; they choose them among other products manufactured for every hotel.

With regard to olfactory marketing, the majority of respondents indicate that they do not have a special treatment and they are working with the perfume companies producing perfumes for hospitality sector, but they prefer mostly fresh smells. As well as the respondents who do not know about the type of perfume used in their hotels, there are some respondents who claim to use the perfume of citrus fruit or Bodrum lemon in common areas like the rooms or lobbies. Some of the respondents admit to use lavender perfumes. There are only two respondents who state that they try to make a fragrance brand of their hotels.

Only one respondent asserts that some guests may be disturbed or may be allergic to a certain type of fragrance and therefore they do not use any specific application other than air fresheners in the rooms. As for restaurants and bars, a respondent emphasizes the importance of the smell of coffee in parallel to the idea of Solomon (2007) that the smell of coffee reminds people of their childhood and home. Valenti and Riviere (2008) obtain the result in their study on sensory marketing applications in food and beverage facilities that emitting the odor of kitchen towards the street can increase the number of customers. In accordance with this result, in this research a respondent admits that the smell of garlic or pepper coming from kitchen is emitted to common areas.

The most significant one among gustative marketing applications is the application of signature dish. Most of the hotels offer local dishes specific to Bodrum area as their signature dish. This result supports the study done by Ditoiu et al. (2014) in which the most important aspect in gustative marketing is found as goulash soup, a local dish of Transylvania region. Some respondents state that they utilize mainly international cuisines because of their customer profile and the only thing that matters is to present the food the guests can always eat with a superior quality and for this aim they add some foods appealing to all people like burger or salad with their hotel name.

Another result of this research is that the hotels are very appropriate facilities to the use of multi-sensory marketing applications.

It is found through the interviews and observations that there are a lot of examples for this application. While some hotels apply these kinds of practices in a strategic way, the others do not apply these consciously.

To sum up, five star hotels operating in Bodrum with tourism licenses apply sensory marketing. The hotels within the sample are appealing to customer senses on purpose or unintentionally in various ways, as found in the study of Valenti and Riviere (2008). The number of hotels applying this approach strategically is limited. As for visual marketing, the colors white, blue, turquoise and beige; as for auditory marketing, the choices of DJ; as for tactile marketing linen clothes in the rooms; as for olfactory marketing orange and lemon perfumes; and as for gustative marketing signature dishes are used dominantly. The location of hotels like Bodrum and their customer profiles have a great influence upon preferences of all these attributes.

For this reason it can be summarized as resort hotels primarily apply to sensory attributes specific to Bodrum. In their study on customers, Kim and Perdue (2013) determine that customers pay attention not only to cognitive attributes like price, service or food and beverage quality, but also to emotional attributes like the feeling of comfort and entertainment and to sensory attributes like room quality and general ambiance and that sensory attributes are not extra accessories but the necessities. As a result of this research, it can be admitted that hotel/department managers care more about the room quality among other sensory attributes.

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