

Aradhna Krishna (ed.) *Sensory Marketing: Research on the Sensuality of Products*. New York: Routledge, 2010. Xxx, 392pp ISBN 978-1-84169-889-2 (pbk) US\$39.95

In June 2008 the first conference to focus on sensory marketing was held in the Ross School of Business, Ann Arbor Michigan. Two years later this volume bringing together papers presented at the conference was published in the format of an edited book. *Sensory Marketing* sticks fairly closely to the format of the original meeting. Chapters discuss how sensory aspects of products affect emotions, memories, perceptions, preferences, choices and consumption. Editor Aradhna Krishna signals a need for consumer behaviour researchers to take on board the sensory turn that has informed much psychological and neurological work published in the last decade, and also suggests that we need to focus on interactions between different senses, instead of assuming that choice is dominated by vision. The conference brought together researchers in an emerging field of research and this edited collection aims to at once introduce the field, facilitate sensory marketing practice and be useful for academic research and teaching.

The volume is organised into five sensory sections: haptics, olfaction, audition, vision and taste. Each section includes four short papers, presented in a similar format and at comparable levels of detail. In all 37 different authors have contributed to the volume, the vast majority of whom are based in marketing or consumer research. In the haptic section chapters by Joann Peck and Roberta Klatsky introduce how the sense works and its relevance for marketing, whilst subsequent chapters focus on incidental touch and product evaluation. The olfactory block also starts out with more general materials, including Herz's excellent overview. Morrin et al offers one of the few considerations in the volume with any multi-sensory interplay in their focus upon scent and music, but Lwin and Wijiya's consideration of feelings and cross cultural similarities fails to convince because of a very narrow sample range and over naive generalisation. I found the sections of material relating to audition and vision the least satisfactory in this book. Audition includes chapters focusing on aspects of music and the spoken word, but fails to explore the affect of genre, media or context in sufficient detail. The wealth of work on visual cues relating to consumption is only poorly reflected in chapters presented here. Only Kahn and Deng's consideration of visual weight perception seemed to offer anything significant or novel. By way of contrast

chapters focusing on taste are more convincing. Krishna and Elder's overview is probably the most persuasive piece in the entire volume and successfully explains the significance of the modality, whilst also offering an interdisciplinary focus largely absent in other chapters. The two subsequent pieces on food also tantalise. The final substantive chapter in this section however seems strangely misplaced, offering as it does a largely visual analysis of size labelling. The collection is topped and tailed by an introduction and multiple-authored conclusion from graduate students, signalling future research directions. An author and subject index concludes the book.

Aradhna Krishna the editor of this volume is "a sensuist who enjoys drinking second flush Darjeeling tea in porcelain cups, collecting figurative art prints, listening to a-tonal jazz, cooking foods with strong aromas, and gardening without gloves"( pp xv). What a shame then that this volume so conspicuously fails to deliver a sensual and critical encounter with consumer culture and practice comparable to her self-professed richly sensual enjoyment!

The format of the volume does not help. It is hard to convey multisensory experience in the format of a relatively cheaply produced academic text book. Even the visual sense is deployed in a very limited fashion here: there is no list of figures and only a single chapter by Kahn and Deng on product image locations offers any visual evidencing of its material to back up its wor(l)dly claim. Elsewhere a few conceptual diagrams frame arguments. But no accompanying web site offers a multi-mediated approach to the apparently significant discussion of multi-sensory desire. Instead the dry academic prose, carefully referenced offers generalized and closed answers.

This book is, however, also a disciplinary prisoner and as a consequence is strongly decontextualized. Almost all of contributors come from consumer marketing or psychological backgrounds. Most offer an apparently neutral and a-cultural interpretation of products, grounded in extensive sample-based interpretation, from which quantitative behavioural differences are unpacked. The process of sensory encounter is almost never explored. There is no participant observation or qualitative interpretation to offer any informed critique of the largely experimental investigation. Instead this collection elides any situated view of the work that the sensual achieves in different cultural contexts. Geography is almost completely lacking here. The

supermarket, the street, the city, the country, the body, the community, the household are all largely absent in texts that treat the commodity as a given, instead of serving as a mutable material form. Its sensual role is deemed to be largely invariant, instead of hybrid, or co-constructed, or negotiated in different cultural contexts.

So despite the promise of this volume its optimistic and boosterist conclusions for the potential of a newly emerging research focus are likely to be of limited value. *Sensory Marketing* is too academic for marketing practitioners. Its narrow disciplinary and methodological focus is too limiting for readers of this journal with wider critical interests. Too few chapters engage with a multi-sensory approach. And perhaps above all and despite the appeal of the topic, its presentation and style is rather boring. As a product it fails to appeal. An interesting paradox in the light of the research findings documented by authors in this somewhat uneven collection of material!

Reviewed by Chris Perkins

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