



Sensory marketing: strategies analysis for religious tourism

Marketing sensorial: análisis de estrategias para el turismo religioso

Carmen Castrejón Mata

Doctora en Administración. Profesora Investigadora de la Universidad de Guanajuato, México. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0600-2977>.

Efraín Canaán Zurita Mézquita

Doctor en Estudios Económico Administrativo de la Universidad Juárez Autónoma de Tabasco, México. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9833-1307>.

Sandra Karime Pérez Castrejón

Doctoranda en Ciencias Sociales. Docente de la Universidad de Guanajuato y Universidad Iberoamericana Campus León.

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0009-1029-5723>

Información del artículo

Recibido:
27/07/2024

Aceptado:
12/09/2024

Publicado:
21/02/2025

*Autor de correspondencia

nadiagaribay@uaz.edu.mx

Páginas:

112 - 122

<http://rperiplo.uaemex.mx/>

DOI <https://doi.org/10.36677/elperiplo.v0i48.24382>

Abstract

The aim of this study is to show how sensory marketing tools can be used by religious tourism achieving the positioning of the enclosures where those images, saints, virgins, etc., are located, making a religious site the destination of visitors looking for a cultural experience different from others. The technique of literature review on various aspects of sensory marketing is used, which makes it possible to analyse the trigger elements in the experience of tourists in a religious site as well as the positioning that can be achieved derived from them through the senses; with these experiences, local markets can be developed from an economic and social point of view. Whereas, according to Iliev (2020). Religious tourism is one of the oldest in history, it materializes in the form of trips with religious motivations that include pilgrimages, conferences, seminars, festivals and any meeting that revolves around a celebration of a spiritual and religious nature. In addition, the organisation assures that religious tourism contributes to economic development and an added value in the tourist offer of cities, towns and regions.

Keywords:

Religious tourism, local market, sensory marketing, social development.

Resumen

El objetivo de este estudio es mostrar cómo las herramientas de marketing sensorial pueden ser utilizadas por el turismo religioso logrando el posicionamiento de los recintos donde se ubican aquellas imágenes, santos, vírgenes, etc., convirtiendo un sitio religioso en el destino de visitantes que buscan un interés cultural, experiencia diferente a los demás. Se utiliza la técnica de revisión de literatura sobre diversos aspectos del marketing sensorial, la cual permite analizar los elementos desencadenantes en la experiencia de los turistas en un sitio religioso, así como el posicionamiento que se puede lograr derivado de ellos a través de los sentidos. Con estas experiencias se pueden desarrollar mercados locales desde el punto de vista económico y social. Mientras que, según Iliev (2020), el turismo religioso es uno de los más antiguos de la historia, se materializa en forma de viajes con motivaciones religiosas que incluyen peregrinaciones, conferencias, seminarios, festivales y cualquier encuentro que gire en torno a una celebración de un carácter espiritual y religioso naturaleza. Además, la organización asegura que el turismo religioso contribuye al desarrollo económico y a un valor añadido en la oferta turística de ciudades, pueblos y regiones.

Palabras clave:

Turismo religioso, mercado local, marketing sensorial, desarrollo social.

Introduction

Over the last few years, tourism marketing has been focused on developing sensorial experiences to those who consume this type of products (Moreno-Lobato et al., 2023: 1). On 2021, Buzova et al., made a study on Mediterranean sea destinations where they tried an instrument to measure five dimensions of what they defined as *sensory marketing of tourist destinations* which where these type of landscapes: visual, olfactory, taste, sound and tactile.

Also, Jit et al. (2015) used pictures that Phoenix, Hunan Province in China destination offers to measure the destination image and found how multisensory factor such as vision, sounds, smell, taste and touch can influence on the attention-grabbing and visitors' attraction to a historical and tourist destination in a country.

Flavián et al. (2021) analyzed the effect on adding essential oils on the environment during a virtual reality (VR) experience for the tourist context. During the lab study, they found that there's a predisposition to feel pleasure and that people had a positive reaction in a digital interaction with images of the destination, as the combination of virtuality with sensory elements created a holistic environment in the participants. In addition, McLean et al. (2023) examined the influence on the visitor's subjective well-being to a touristic destination using VR.

Sensory marketing can be defined as "the marketing that appeals to the senses of consumers and affects their perception, judgement and behavior through a product or service" (Krishna, 2021: 332); by adding senses to influence in these perceptions and shopping behavior, persuading in the consumer's response to the good or service offered (Zhang & Spence, 2023); touch and vision as means to capture the attention of a possible client (Juárez-Varón et al., 2023); that serve to guide attention during the purchase selection process (Wästlund et al., 2018).

Furthermore, sensory marketing has been used in studies to evaluate sensations, emotions and perceptions in the food industry, as it allows to identify through taste what costumers experience in relation to a product (Giacalone y Jaeger, 2021); as well as in tourism industry to explore the impact that sound, smell and images have on the visitors imaginary and how they influence the way they live their experience at the destination (Velasco et al., 2023).

In addition, it has been used to study peoples reactions when using means of transportation such as bicycles and motorcycles in tourist destinations, measuring in a biometric way the physical stimuli that people have in a tactil and visual way (Scuttari, 2021). To measure these visual components that could influence the decision to visit a tourist destination are: colors, textures, composition, semantic content spatial and temporary information through images that are a glimpse for the visitor (Lingxue et al., 2024).

Perceptual and sensory influences

Šola et al. (2022) studied how vision can have an influence at a neuronal level generating an ability to respond to emotional stimuli that affects how a consumer behaves when visiting Facebook profiles. Also, Casado-Aranda et al. (2022) evaluated the hedonic influence produced on consumers by viewing advertisements that they found attractive.

Moreno-Lobato et al. (2023) analyzed the role that music and sounds have in the reactions it provokes in tourists when they go to a tourist site; Lehrner et al. (2005) analyzed anxiety, mood, state of alertness and calmness of people who attended to a dental office, this through the use of lavender and orange essential oils to create an atmosphere with this smells.

Moreover, it has been used on retail trade to measure the degree of excitement the buyer perceives when receiving a service, which affects the emotional response and also influence their purchase decision and acquiring other products that they hadn't planned to purchase (Caruelle et al., 2024).

Sensory marketing studies

In tables 1 and 1a are shown studies that applied sensory marketing elements with a market perspective; this studies allow us to observe from different methodological designs those elements that are studied and the effects in each of the senses.

Table 1. Studies using sensory marketing in multiple sectors

Author(s)	Sensory Marketing Elements	Sector	Methodological Design	Considerations
Lehrner, Marwinski, Lehr, Johren & Deecke (2005)	Seek to generate calm, lower the feeling of alertness, anxiety and mood using lavender and orange essential oil scents.	Dental	Quantitative through a study with 200 patients divided in two groups to control the study variables.	The use of odors to generate positive or negative reactions with participants.
SooCheong & Young (2009)	Creation of positive and negative emotions through environmental stimuli	Restaurant	Quantitative with 40 participants for the pilot test and 347 for the final test. A confirmatory factor analysis and a model of structural equations were used.	Stimulus that sets an influence on the emotional and behavioral intentions of consumers when they go to a restaurant, which may have an impact on the experience lived there and the intention to return in the future.
Wästlund, Shams & Otterbring (2018)	Peripheral vision	Retail trade	Quasi - experimental study with 101 participants divided in three groups where the independent variable was the peripheral vision of each participant while dependent variables were the projected images, size and shape of the figures that were projected, and distance between the device and the projector. Each participant's eye movements were recorded with a binocular device.	Peripheral visual process is used to segment between products of interest and non-interest. By observing a small portion of the total space, the consumer is influenced by this to prefer one product over another which leads to a purchasing decision.

Author(s)	Sensory Marketing Elements	Sector	Methodological Design	Considerations
Verastegui-Tena, van Trijp & Piqueras-Fiszman (2019)	Visual and sense of taste	Food	Quantitative, experimental design study with 86 participants using a software to measure their visual and taste responses.	Relationship between the image of a product, combined with the taste that the person has previously established in their taste buds, influences the decision to choose certain product and causes changes in heart rate, and skin conductivity.
Šola, Mikac & Rončević (2022)	Visual	Educational and consultant	Quantitative study with 43 participants. A software device was used to monitor the eye movements of those involved in the study. Simultaneously, a questionnaire was applied to compare cognitive and subliminal responses.	Sight is stimulated through the content and thus understand how neuronal ways can influence emotions, attitudes and behavior of an individual.
Fakhreddine & Sánchez	Taste, color and aroma	Food (extra virgin olive oil)	Quantitative study using a product testing room located at the Public University of Navarra, where 207 consumers of extra virgin olive oil participated. Applying an experimental design where they divided the sample into people concerned and not concerned about health issues.	As intrinsic elements the taste, taste, color, aroma and tasting are an indicative that could influence the intention to purchase extra virgin olive oil. This, combined with the brand image created by actions and the health benefits promotion highlighted the positive aspect of consuming this product.
Juárez-Varón, Mengual-Recuerda, Capatina & Núñez (2023)	Visual and tactil stimulation	Footwear	Qualitative and biometric study with 30 participants. Experimental design employing equipment to measure the reaction to their visual and tactile stimuli towards the shoes.	Measure the response of attendees in a real store to identify their areas of interest. Touch and sight are involved in the decision-making process of a product.
Velasco, Corrodi & Motoki (2023)	Visual, sound and taste	Restaurant	Quantitative experimental study with 99 participants. Using sounds that were combined with taste tests (salty, sweet and spicy) to measure the degree of excitement when these two sensory stimuli were combined.	Sound produced by music can influence the dimension of aesthetics that a client has in a restaurant. That when combined with the taste produced on the palate certain flavors of food, influences the imaginative taste produced in the participant's brain.
Caruelle, Shams, Gustafsson & Lervik-Olsen (2024)	Sensory emotions	Retail trade	Experimental study carried out in a supermarket and a hardware store. An electrodermal activity equipment was used to measure the excitement of emotions upon receiving the service provided by the facility. The final test had 125 participants.	Creating experiences for customers can occur by providing a service that they can evaluate in the moment: the atmosphere created in the store to please the customer, employees with friendly attitudes and finally, surprises at the moment of entering the store can make the customer feel excited.

Table 1a. Studies using sensory marketing in tourist sector

Author(s)	Sensory Marketing Elements	Method	Considerations
Buzova, Sanz-Blas & Cervera-Taulet (2021)	Sensory landscape of a tourist destination	Mixed study with a qualitative first stage to create the items to be evaluated, followed by two quantitative stages that consisted of a pilot test with 176 participants and a final validation with 737 participants.	As a result, vision was the sense that turned out to influence the configuration and impression of a destiny. Followed by touch, as a somatic-sensory experiential condition. The smell of the city was also relevant to influence the decision to return and recommend the destination.
Flavián, Ibáñez-Sánchez & Orús (2021)	Essences spread in the environment	Quantitative through an experimental design with 263 participants. Seeking to measure the effects of applying VR and aromatic essences and how it influences on the olfactory stimulus. Divided in two groups with stimulation and one without the essences.	The effect that VR has on the imagination is shown in this study. Where images of a destination become part of the stimulation process, combined with essences spread throughout the environment makes the user's experience of the virtual device more pleasant.
Scuttari (2021)	Visual, phsyco-fiological and touchable	Mixed method co-occurring. Qualitative with documentary and digital ethnographic analysis based on trips made by the participants within the city. Using a biosensor, a questionnaire and the collected images, which were analyzed by the NVivo program. The quantitative section analyzed the results obtained by the biosensor device to measure psychophysiological reactions.	The tourist experience from the perspective of moving within the destination was analyzed in this study. Identifying social, physical and emotional elements that shape the mobility experience whether by motorcycle or bicycle within a tourist destination.
McLean, AlYahya, Barhorst & Osei-Frimpong (2023)	Subjective well-being through VR images	Quantitative study with experimental design and a questionnaire technique using VR headphones.	Understanding the consumption of digital tourism through holistic experiences, carried out through VR.
Moreno-Lobato, Di-Clemente, Hernández Mogollón & Campón-Cerro (2023)	Music and audio	Systematic literature review and bibliometric analysis. Use of Web of Sciences (WOS) and Scopus databases. PRISMA Method.	Music and emotions are studied to understand the level and degree of response, such as reactions of potential buyers. This using music and sounds that influence their experience when consuming a tourist product.

Source: Own elaboration based on authors cited in the table.

Sensory development of human experiences

Considering the senses inherent to the human being, studies with evidence of conditioning factors that can be evaluated with the use of sensory elements that allow their study are shown in tables 2, 2a and 2b.

It is important to point out, in relation to our subject of study, that there are several factors that contribute not only to its study but also some of its manifestations that can be identified in each of the application processes with sensory elements as strategies that can allow its adaptation to religious tourism in any entity or organization, whether for profit or not.

Although, from the point of view of social marketing we can speak of non-profit religious tourism from a very general perspective it is identified that throughout the world and throughout history there have been economic entities that have managed to permeate an image different from what could be considered as part of non-profit organizations.

However, the dividing line between profit and non-profit in religious marketing is often imperceptible, either because it does not seek or have a full intentionality of profit, or the senses -almost irrationally- justify this imperceptibility.

Table 2. Understanding the human senses through sight sensory elements applied

Author(s)	Elements	Events	Considerations
Fakhreddine y Sánchez (2023)	Color	Trust in sight	Rejection to the product if the color is not related of what they have known
Flavián, Ibáñez-Sánchez & Orús (2021)	VR images	Stimulate imagination	Effect of VR-produced images on purchasing decisions
Šola, Mikac y Rončević (2022)	Images from a technology device	Neuronal stimulation that emerge from what is seen	Neural-level effects on the body that affect feelings, emotions, attitudes and behaviour
Casado-Aranda, Sánchez-Fernández & Ibáñez-Zapata (2022)	Perceived images	Neuronal stimulation	Generating impulsive behaviours in shoppers when shopping online
Buzova, Sanz-Blas & Cervera-Taulet (2021)		Joy of what is seen in the destination	Display elements that the destination offers that seem attractive to the visitor
Jia, Hashim & Murphy (2015)	Images in a space	Appreciate what the environment offers	Consider rich graphics with color, shapes and sizes
SooCheong & Young (2009)	Atmosphere of the environment	Approach or rejection	Positive emotions (joy, enthusiasm and tranquility) and negative emotions (anger, anguish, disgust, fear and shame), physical stimulation (pleasure, excitement and control)

Source: Own elaboration based on authors cited in the table.

Table 2a. Understanding the human senses through smell and hearing sensory elements applied

Sense	Author(s)	Element	Events	Considerations
Smell	Fakhreddine & Sánchez (2023)	Aroma	Pleasant to the smell	Influence the decision to purchase a product
	Jia, Hashim & Murphy (2015)		Odours perceived at the site	Can change the perception we have of a space
	Lehrner, Marwinski, Lehr, Jöhren & Deecke (2005)	Odours	Emotions through essential oils	Alteration of emotions to reduce anxiety, create calm, lower alertness and improve mood
	Buzova, Sanz-Blas & Cervera-Taulet (2021)		Emotions generated through the smell of food, drinks and nature elements	Reactions generated by smelling things in the environment become pleasant to the visitor
	Flavián, Ibáñez-Sánchez & Orús (2021)	Aromatic essences with vaporizers	Reaction to smell essences	Reaction that creates odours found in the environment
Hearing	Moreno-Lobato et al. (2023)	Music and sounds	Personal taste, preferences, experiencias and expectations	Induces emotions, activations (neural and psychophysiological)
	Flavián, Ibáñez-Sánchez & Orús (2021)	Virtual sounds	Auditory stimulus generated with VR	Reaction that positively promotes a decision
	SooCheong & Young (2009)	Atmosphere of the environment	Approach or rejection	Positive emotions (joy, enthusiasm and calm), negative emotions (anger, anguish, disgust, fear and shame) and physical stimulation (pleasure, excitement and control)
	Buzova, Sanz-Blas & Cervera-Taulet (2021)			Sounds heard at the destination, occurred around the visitor

Source: Own elaboration based on authors cited in the table.

Table 2b. Understanding the human senses through taste and touch sensory elements applied

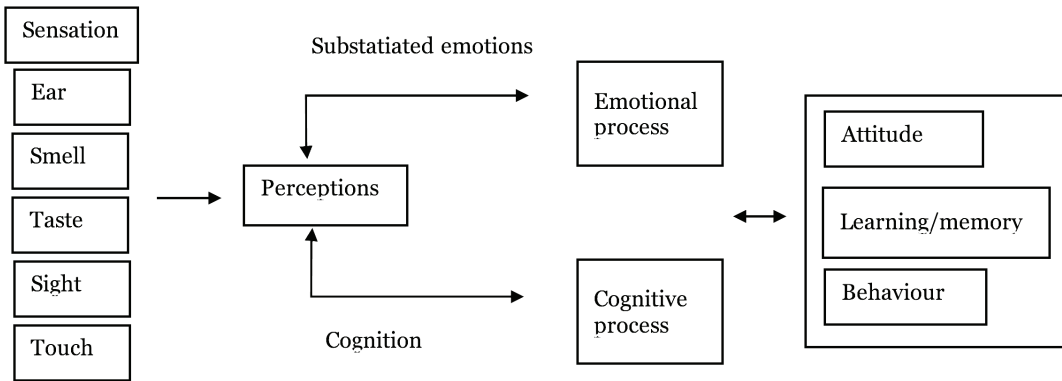
Sense	Author(s)	Element	Events	Considerations
Taste	Buzova, Sanz-Blas & Cervera-Taulet (2021)	Flavor perception	Pleasant taste to the palate	Flavours that emerge when tasting drinks, meals and the general gastronomy of the destination site
	Fakhreddine & Sánchez (2023)	Flavor	Pleasant to the palate, perception (spicy, bitter or fruity)	Induces the decision to purchase the product
Touch	Jia, Hashim & Murphy (2015)	Interactive technology	Technology devices, spaces and interactive games	Enriches the multisensory experience
	Buzova, Sanz-Blas & Cervera-Taulet (2021)	Sensation provoked	Feeling elements of destiny	Warmth, coldness, freshness, positive feelings, negative or not, regarding elements of destiny

Source: Own elaboration based on authors cited in the table.

Sensory theoretical conceptualization

Conceptual models allow us to understand in a theoretically and multidisciplinary way the relations existing in the processes that are being studied, in figure 1 is shown Krishna’s (2012) model which integrates the sensations experienced by human beings and how this are perceived to generate the emotions from the cognitive-emotional process developing attitudes, knowledge that remains in the memory and behaviors that reflect the process in which someone was immensely involved.

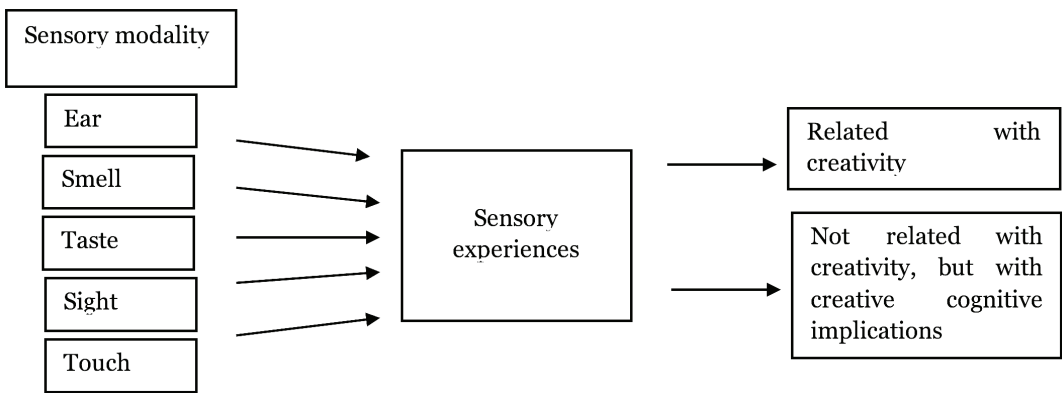
Figure 1. Sensory marketing conceptual model



Source: (Krishna, 2012).

Figure 2 shows the model of Zhi and Mehta (2017) where they establish that sensory modality in human beings is composed of the five senses that generate the sensory experiences, which are also related with creativity or have implications for creative cognition.

Figure 2. Sensory creativity conceptual model



Source: (Zhi & Mehta, 2017).

Final considerations

The multiple studies and theories analysis that show sensory marketing elements, interactions, processes and effects on human beings are an analytical tool that can contribute to the study of religious tourism from different perspectives, but particularly making it clear that each and every one of them have a research contribution of the importance of these as the first studies approach to what is shown in this article.

Sensory marketing as a tool used in religious tourism can be useful. Consider that the halo of spirituality that directs this tourist practice allows it to use elements such as smoke, the smell of the wood of religious figures, the use of incense, flowers, or any aroma that helps the development of the sensory experience on the part of the tourist. of the visitor.

Likewise, work on emphasizing sounds through the use of speakers that transmit songs and sacred music so that the visitor to the religious destination hears those sounds that bring back memories of his childhood and his life. The view also becomes an important element since if the visitor finds the infrastructure that is around and within the religious premises, it can generate a feeling of calm that helps them enjoy their stay at the religious destination.

It is important to mention that, for future research lines, it may be possible to study the aspects that gender studies could contribute to identify those differences in sensory impacts derived from each of the research subjects exposed to these sensory strategies and the elements and dimensions studied.

Another research line based on these analyses and characterizations observed in the presented collection is the level of immersion in the religious spaces themselves as the sensory stimuli and a longer stay in them is achieved.

References

- Buzova, D., Sanz-Blas, S. & Cervera-Taulet, A. (2021). "Sensing" the destination: Development of the destination sensescape index. *Tourism Management*, (87), 1-9. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2021.104362>.
- Caruelle, D., Shams, P., Gustafsson, A. & Lervik-Olsen, L. (2024). Emotional arousal in customer experience: A dynamic view. *Journal of Business Research*, (170), 1-12. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2023.114344>.
- Casado-Aranda, L.A., Sánchez-Fernández, J. & Ibáñez-Zapata, J. (2022). It is all about our impulsiveness – How consumer impulsiveness modulates neural evaluation of hedonic and utilitarian banners. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, (67), 1-11. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2022.102997>.
- Fakhreddine, L. & Sánchez, M. (2023). The interplay between health claims and sensory attributes in determining consumers' purchase intentions for extra virgin olive oil. *Food Quality and Preference*, (106), 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.foodqual.2023.104819>.
- Flavián, C., Ibáñez-Sánchez, S. & Orús, C. (2021). The influence of scent on virtual reality experiences: The role of aroma-content congruence. *Journal of Business Research*, (123), 289-301. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2020.09.036>.
- Giacalone, D., Jaeger, S. (2021). Sensory drivers of perceived situational appropriateness in unbranded foods and beverages: Towards a deeper understanding. *Appetite*, (167), 1-11. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.appet.2021.105589>.
- Iliev, D. (2020). The evolution of religious tourism: Concept, segmentation and development of new identities. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*, (45), 131-140. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhtm.2020.07.012>.
- Jia, X., Hashim, N. & Murphy, J. (2015). Multisensory image as a component of destination image. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, (14), 34-41. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.tmp.2015.03.001>.
- Juárez-Varón, D., Mengual-Recuerda, A., Capatina, A. & Núñez, M. (2023). Footwear consumer behavior: The influence of stimuli on emotions and decision making. *Journal of Business Research*, (164), 1-15. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2023.114016>.
- Krishna, A. (2012). An integrative review of sensory marketing: Engaging the senses to affect perception, judgment and behavior. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, (22), 332-351. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcps.2011.08.003>.
- Lehrner, J., Marwinski, G., Lehr, S., Jöhren, P. & Deecke, L. (2005). Ambient odors of orange and lavender reduce anxiety and improve mood in a dental office. *Physiology & Behavior*, (86), 92-95. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.physbeh.2005.06.031>.
- Lingxue, Z., Mingming, C. & Jingjie, Z. (2024). Progress on image analytics: Implications for tourism and hospitality research. *Tourism Management*, (100), 1-15. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2023.104798>.

- McLean, G., AlYahya, M., Barhorst, J. & Osei-Frimpong, K. (2023). Examining the influence of virtual reality tourism on consumers' subjective wellbeing. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, (46), 1-11. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tmp.2023.101088>.
- Moreno-Lobato, A., Di-Clemente, E., Hernández-Mogollón, J.M. & Campón-Cerro, A.M. (2023). How emotions sound. A literature review of music as an emotional tool in tourism marketing. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, (48), 1-11. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tmp.2023.101154>.
- Scuttari, A. (2021). Tourism experiences in motion. Mobile, visual and psychophysiological methods to capture tourists "on the move". *Tourism Management Perspectives*, (38), 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tmp.2021.100825>.
- Šola, H., Mikac, M. & Rončević, I. (2022). Tracking unconscious response to visual stimuli to better understand a pattern of human behavior on a Facebook page. *Journal of Innovation & Knowledge*, (7), 1-9. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jik.2022.100166>.
- SooCheong, J. & Young, N. (2009). Perceived quality, emotions, and behavioral intentions: Application of an extended Mehrabian-Rusell model to restaurants. *Journal of Business Research*, 62(4), 451-460. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2008.01.038>.
- Velasco, C., Corradi, G. & Motoki, K. (2023). Harmony of senses: Exploring the impact sound aesthetic features' on taste imagery. *Food Quality and Preference*, (111), 1-8. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.foodqual.2023.104992>.
- Verastegui-Tena, L., van Trijp, H. & Piqueras-Fiszman, B. (2019). Heart rate, skin conductance, and explicit responses to juice simples with varying levels of expectation (dis)confirmation. *Food Quality and Preference*, (71), 320-331. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.foodqual.2018.08.011>.
- Wästlund, E., Shams, P. & Otterbring, T. (2018). Unsold is unseen... or is it? Examining the role of peripheral vision in the consumer choice process using eye-tracking methodology. *Appetite*, (120), 49-56. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.appet.2017.08.024>.
- Zhang, T. & Spence, C. (2023). Orthonasal olfactory influences on consumer food behaviour. *Appetite*, (190), 1-20. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.appet.2023.107023>.
- Zhu, R. & Mehta, R. (2017). Sensory experiences and consumer creativity. *Journal of the Association for Consumer Research*, 2(4), 472-484. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1086/693161>.