

The role of sensory marketing and brand experience in building emotional attachment and brand loyalty in luxury retail stores

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Abstract

Prior studies on the in-store experience focus on the impact of store atmosphere. Sensory marketing and brand experience, on the other hand, have been found to be significant in providing a better consumer experience in recent studies. Thus, the goal of this paper is to broaden the scope of this study by examining the causal effect of sensory marketing cues and brand experience on emotional attachment, and subsequent brand loyalty in a luxury retail store setting. We also studied the moderating role of store image in the relationships. To this end, the three separate but related studies (Study 1, $N = 409$, Study 2, $N = 294$, Study 3, $N = 139$) were conducted. Study 1 shows that sensory marketing cues positively contribute to enhancing the luxury retail brand experiences. Both sensory marketing and brand experiences appeared promising in increasing emotional attachment and subsequent brand loyalty. Study 2 findings further suggest that sensory marketing cues and brand experience interact significantly with store image to improve consumers' emotional attachment with luxury brands. Study 3 replicated the pattern observed in Studies 1 and 2 and further suggested that consumers in the luxury store setting expressed stronger emotional attachment and brand loyalty than consumers in the nonluxury store environment.

KEYWORDS

brand experience, brand loyalty, luxury stores, sensory marketing cues, store image

1 | INTRODUCTION

Consumer buying habits are changing as they become more experienced-oriented (Bilgihan et al., 2016; Paul, 2019; Husein, Paul & Koles, 2022) and have a greater demand for additional value in products (Wiedmann et al., 2013). Experience-based consumption prioritizes the desire and choice of the consumers (MSI, 2020; Song & Qu, 2019). In the "experience economy," where the process of purchasing a product is as significant as the product, stores play a crucial part in conveying the

retailers' beliefs and market strategy to potential customers (Moore & Doherty, 2007). If performed well, it provides a guided luxury consuming experience that reflects the position of luxury stores and their brand in a consistent and cohesive manner (Manlow & Nobbs, 2013). An experience is a blend of a planned operation, personal memories, and an individual's subjective viewpoint (Wiedmann et al., 2013). Providing enjoyable experiences to attract and emotionally tie consumers has become an important part of luxury management (Kauppinen-Räsänen et al., 2020). Since luxury brands promise a sensory product experience

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(Jhamb et al., 2020; Joshi & Garg, 2021), the multisensory dimension serves as an integral feature of luxury brands and their related strategies.

Sensory marketing (Krishna, 2011) has been defined as “marketing that engages the consumers' senses and affects their perception, judgment, and behaviour” (pp. 333). Krishna and Schwarz (2014) emphasized the significance of “sensory marketing and embodied cognition,” which outlines the belief that we experience the world through our senses and our physical sensations have a substantial impact on the decisions we make beyond our consciousness. Critically speaking, sensory marketing offers customers a sensory experience that gives additional value to their consumption (Hultén, 2011; Roggeveen et al., 2020).

Technological advancement in the retail space has proposed a more emotional and serendipitous customer experience, captivating the customer's desires through the five senses of touch, smell, taste, sight, and hearing (Schmitt, 1999; Vargo & Lusch, 2004). In theory, the typical viewpoint of establishing more sensory touchpoints with consumers is an exemplary concept, particularly as a tactic for creating marketplace differentiation (Vukadin et al., 2019; Wiedmann et al., 2018). As shopping in physical stores involves a unique premium experience (Moreau, 2020), by way of systematic and comprehensive sensory appeal, consumers' emotions can be strengthened and connected to a comprehensive brand experience (de Oliveira Santini et al., 2018). As a result, consumers may get attached to the brand which can influence their consumption behaviour (Turley & Milliman, 2000).

The luxury industry is defined by emotions and feelings rather than traditional attributes (Amatulli & Guido, 2011). Having a pleasant brand experience is widely confirmed in the luxury market (Fionda & Moore, 2009). Moreover, a positive brand experience comprises a consumer's psychological-emotional “bond” with the brand which leads to the evolution of brand loyalty (Park et al., 2010) as it corresponds to goal-oriented experiential marketing that explores the implementation of all senses (Lindstrom, 2005). Luxury stores that fulfill consumers' desires to touch, feel, and experience a high-end product before purchase, act as a basis for the inclusion of consumer experiences within service sectors (Kauppinen-Räsänen, 2020; Lunardo & Mouangue, 2019; Wiedmann et al., 2018). Luxury stores create an atmosphere of awe, uniqueness, and admiration (Dion & Arnould, 2011) as aesthetics and retail experience surround their product purchase. Customers' brand experiences and sensory marketing have been previously researched (Hultén, 2011; Iglesias et al., 2019), but there is a need for more evidence to comprehend the interplay of these constructs (Atwal & Williams, 2017; Wiedmann et al., 2018). Wiedmann et al. (2018) also recommend studying the causal relationships between brand-related outcomes, as it is largely unexplored. Thus, the objective of this paper is to study the interplay between sensory marketing cues (Hultén, 2011), and brand experience (Klein et al., 2016), on consumer emotional attachment (Gilal et al., 2019) which subsequently leads to brand loyalty. Therefore, the research environment for this study i.e.,

luxury stores was considered to obtain comprehensive knowledge of the relationship between these facets. The moderating role of store image was also examined.

This paper makes three important contributions to sensory marketing cues, experiential marketing, and luxury retail channel environment literature. First, this research supports the notion of inference theory and shopping patronage theory by examining the effect of sensory marketing cues and brand experience on store brand loyalty. Further determining which variable is more promising for enhancing store brand loyalty in the luxury retail channel environment. Second, the majority of existing research on the in-store experience focuses on the impact of store atmosphere. We contributed to previous research by examining whether sensory marketing and brand experience influenced consumer behaviour outcomes such as emotional attachment and loyalty. As such, we tested whether emotional attachment contributes to facilitating store brand loyalty formation in the emerging markets. Third, the goal of this research was to discover if the influence of sensory marketing cues and brand experience on emotional attachment is moderated by store image. Given this, three separate but related studies are designed to test five research hypotheses using data from two countries.

2 | THEORY AND HYPOTHESES

This study branches from two theories—Shopping Patronage Theory (Sheth, 1983) and Inference Theory (Jones & Davis, 1965).

2.1 | Shopping patronage theory

The shopping patronage theory proposed by Sheth (1983) has a foundation in psychological literature. It implies that customer preferences and purchasing behaviour in a store could be affected by functional and nonfunctional events (Sheth, 1981, 1983). Functional motivation or events can be the need for touch for intrinsic reasons (Workman & Cho, 2013) and nonfunctional events can be store image, the atmosphere in the store, or the people. Workman and Cho (2013) also state that consumers' in-store shopping might be for leisure or experiential reasons, such as enjoyment and sensory fulfilment. These motivations (i.e., pleasure and fulfilment of the senses) have found support in other studies (Peck and Childers, 2003; Roy et al., 2016). The effectiveness of retail stores to satisfy experience motives varies. In-store shopping thrives at achieving experiential objectives as customers can use their senses to examine, touch, wear, smell, and taste products. Since luxury is more about emotions and experience (von Wallpach et al., 2020), consumer buying decisions in this market rely on the products' emotional and experiential attraction (Dhaliwal et al., 2020), which shows an encouraging effect on the consumers.

For this reason, marketers have supported the idea that providing an extraordinary in-store experience is essential compared

to creating value for the customers by merely selling products or services (Debenedetti, 2021). Brand managers have advocated for the potential of stimulating the five senses (touch, smell, taste, sight, and hearing) to stoke consumers' emotions and develop the perfect atmosphere to help the brand create a unique influence (Hult n, 2011). These distinct sensations are combined in the mind of the consumers and pooled into a complete brand experience (Lindstrom, 2005), resulting in an emotional attachment to the brand (Cardinale et al., 2016), which subsequently leads to brand loyalty (Francisco-Maffezzolli et al., 2014).

2.2 | Inference theory

Our research is based on Kardes well-established inference theory (Kardes, 1993; Kardes et al., 2004), which aims to better grasp how customers respond to store branding cues. Kardes' theory emphasises the presence of cues in an organization and the way in which new customers are likely to utilise those cues to form assumptions about the essence of the organization (Lude & Prugl, 2018). Monroe & Krishna, (1985) state that individuals make assumptions about the unknown relying on the information they have (i.e., consumers employ atmospheric signals to discover information that is either unavailable or difficult to determine). In the retail scenario, consumers make store decisions and inferences from the store environment (Baek et al., 2018). Empirical research has supported the claim that store environment cues influence consumer inferences and beliefs about a retailer's products, service, pricing, and shopping experience (Grewal et al., 2003). For example, retailers focus on how environmental experiences in the retail space are structured and organized to impact consumer behavior (Baker et al., 2002). Furthermore, retailers' efforts to improve and enhance customer interaction within the store have shifted from products to store atmospherics (Spence et al., 2014). Researchers have even reported the benefits of store atmosphere on consumers' internal states following behavioural reactions like store preference and patronage intention (Orth & Wirtz, 2014). Lin and Hsu (2012) state that the image of a retail store must be described as the way in which the store is seen by the consumer partially due to its utilitarian properties, and partly due to cognitive attributes. Therefore, for this study, we propose that consumers draw conclusions based on the store atmosphere while evaluating sensory signals and store images.

2.3 | Luxury stores

Kotler (1973) focused on the importance of the retail environment to make an impression on potential customers. Welte et al. (2021) state that providing exceptional services in stores is very important. The use of sensory cues in stores has been acknowledged as a way to influence consumers' brand experience (Arrigo, 2018; Lemon & Verhoef, 2016) and develop brand attachment (Nierobisch et al., 2017). Moreover, the store environment reflects a type of

nonverbal communication between a consumer and a brand (Arrigo, 2018). Luxury stores serve as a "first point of contact" between company and consumer in a physical space (Lunardo & Mouangue, 2019). The turning of physical places into a multisensory experience is likely to be critical for luxury brands to evoke pleasant feelings and actions (Brakus et al., 2009). Eliciting extremely pleasant feelings such as comfort or enjoyment has been reported in the retail literature (Kim et al., 2016). As the luxury store is an important part of luxury retailing (Moore et al., 2010), it is pivotal in expressing brand image and satisfying customers' expectations (Liu et al., 2016). Furthermore, luxury stores have the propensity to elicit positive emotions (Lunardo & Mouangue, 2019). They allow customers to experience a brand using all their senses (Wiedmann et al., 2018). It makes customers feel as if they are in a privileged environment (Dion & Arnould, 2011). Simply visiting a luxury store can result in a pleasurable emotional experience for the consumers (Kauppinen-R is nen et al., 2020).

Dion and Arnould (2011) provided five key reasons that differentiate luxury stores from standard or upgraded brand stores. Luxury stores (i) use craftsmanship to evoke exclusivity and beauty appeal, (ii) convey a sense of genuineness, (iii) enjoy credibility as a result of their attractive character, (iv) communicate the charm of the creative leader, and (v) base their shopping philosophy on beauty. Their technique implies using protocols that employees must follow to elicit sentiments of exclusivity in customers (Lunardo & Mouangue, 2019). Dion and Borraz (2017) state that in luxury stores the value of the material and social cues aids consumers' enactment of their status position. While earlier researchers (Dion & Arnould, 2011; Dion & Borraz, 2015; Liu et al., 2013) have demonstrated the importance of luxury stores, they do not address customer experience, nor do they provide knowledge into the aspects of service interactions in luxury stores that lead to pleasurable experiences (Kauppinen-R is nen et al., 2020).

2.4 | Hypotheses development

To examine the relationships mentioned above, we formulated a theoretical framework based on consumers' experience with luxury stores, which will effectively express the individual constructs concerning the plausible relationship built on the prior theoretical understanding. Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual model. In the section above, there was a brief outline of the chosen constructs based on the theories. In the subsequent segments, sensory marketing cues, store image, brand experience, emotional attachment, and brand loyalty are discussed in-depth.

2.5 | Sensory marketing cues and brand experience

While traditional marketing predominantly conveys product benefits, experiential marketing attempts to use products/services to strengthen consumers' emotions and sense stimuli (Wiedmann

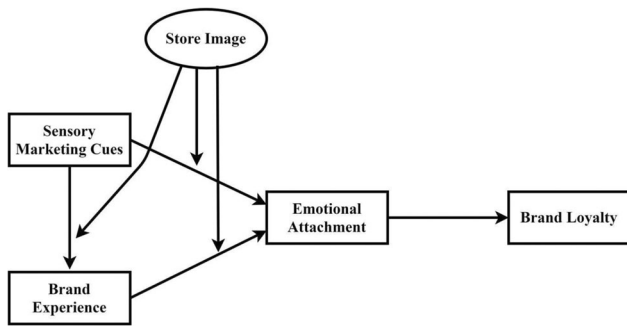


FIGURE 1 Conceptual Model

et al., 2018), which is referred to as “sensory marketing.” It is a marketing tactic that can be explained as “marketing that engages the consumers' senses and affects their perception, judgment, and behaviour” (Krishna, 2012; Xixiang et al., 2016). It strives to deepen the relationship between the brand and the customer by stimulating one of, or a combination of, the five senses: touch, smell, taste, sight, and hearing. It aims to supply consumers with memorable experiences to establish a sustainable image and encourage significant consumer behaviour (Pelletier & Collier, 2018). Researchers have studied sensory marketing in the context of destination branding (Lv & McCabe, 2020), packaging design (Van Rompay et al., 2014), FMCG advertising (Krishna et al., 2010), healthy eating (Cornil & Chandon, 2016), and store atmosphere (Helmefalk, 2019). As sensory stimuli create robust links between consumers and the brand, such interplay acknowledges sensory cues to build a more unique experience in comparison to other marketing strategies (Hultén, 2011). From a theoretical viewpoint, sensory marketing articulates customer experience literature. Due to high competition, there is a proliferation of touchpoints, and a growing resemblance between competitive products (Brakus et al., 2009; Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). Kotler (1973) opines that taste is not important to store experience or image, as taste's subjectivity builds a complex process for its application in the store's atmospherics. It thus underlies the complexity of the role of taste. Kah et al. (2020) support this point of view which reveals the trivial impact of taste in increasing destination identity. Therefore, the taste was excluded from the current study. Moreover, an increasing number of studies have demonstrated that positive sensory stimuli like sight, smell, sound, and touch, if managed properly can drive a broad variety of consumers' behavioural responses such as store choice and preferences (Soars, 2009), inducing relaxation (Serrano et al., 2016), and destination identity (Kah et al., 2020). These different experiences are then combined in the mind of the customer to form a holistic brand experience (Hultén, 2011). The number of senses that are treated in a consistent manner enhances the quality of the experience (Soars, 2009). In this situation, brand managers must avoid sensory overload and balance all sensory inputs to provide an excellent and impactful experience (Wiedmann et al., 2018). Kumagai and Nagasawa (2021) state that in-store retail is a significant marketing area because physical encounters are intimately linked to

an individual's five senses. Building on these findings and relying on a tenet of shopping patronage theory, we expect that positive sensory marketing cues can significantly influence customers' experiences of luxury retail brands. Thus, we predict:

H1: Positive sensory marketing cues have a positive impact on brand experience.

2.6 | Sensory marketing and emotional attachment

The human senses contribute significantly to the understanding of customers and have a great influence on their purchase outcome (Hultén, 2011). In a limited time manner, marketers have assimilated the senses into brand communication to create an emotional connection with a particular brand or product (Shimul et al., 2019). Researchers (Chen & Lin, 2018; Lindstrom, 2005; Tsaur et al., 2007) have reported that consumer emotions are extensively influenced by sensory cues, which play a key role in the formation of emotional connections between consumers and brands. Nowadays, by activating all the senses (Krishna, 2012) and triggering emotions, sensory marketing has been recognized as a critical tool to reinforce the bond between product and customer. Moreover, sensory marketing cues are considered a key antecedent for the marketer's search to communicate with—and respond to—the ever-emerging and progressively ambitious modern customers by relating to them on an emotional level (Walsh et al., 2011). Sensory marketing influences all five human senses to affect mechanisms of perception, memory, and learning, which control the emotions, preferences, and actions of customers (Krishna & Schwarz, 2014; Krishna, 2012). The objective is to build an understanding of the senses that enhances the bond with consumers but at a changeable rate (Fugate, 2007). An outstanding sensory experience (Haase et al., 2020) can forge a strong relationship and build an emotional attachment to the product or service, affect the attitude and behaviour of the customer, and increase satisfaction. Subsequently, the consumer becomes more inclined to buy products, spend more time in the store, become more open, and develop into loyal customers. Thus, we expect:

H2: Positive sensory marketing cues have a positive impact on emotional attachment with the brand.

2.7 | Brand experience and emotional attachment

According to Brakus et al. (2009) brand experience refers to the “sensations, feelings, cognitions, and behavioural responses evoked by brand-related stimuli that are part of a brand's design, identity, packaging, communications, and environment” (pp. 52). Brand experience is created when consumers connect with the brand during their purchasing process (Kumar & Kaushik, 2020). Recently, branding literature has focused on the role of emotions as a contact for consumers' attachment to brands (Joshi & Garg, 2021; Paul, 2015; 2018; 2019; Yoo & MacInnis, 2005). Hwang and Kandampully (2012) propose that it is the emotions that establish

and expresses consumers' values by building robust relationships with the brands. Some sensations relevant to the touchpoint are adequate to frame a perception in the consumers' minds, which in turn, forms a memorable brand experience for the consumers (Smilansky, 2017) and connects them to the brand emotionally. Therefore, brands should concentrate on the emotional bonding between brands and customers who live and shop for the brand experience as a variable in marketing strategies to build relationships (Nair, 2018). Studies have also shown that a brand can connect consumers emotionally and build a strong customer-brand relationship by offering a superior brand experience (Mingione et al., 2020).

Furthermore, brand experience acts as a critical component in luxury retail, as a positive brand experience enables luxury brands to bind with the consumers on an emotional front (Dion & Borraz, 2017; Shahid et al., 2021). To understand the consumer's feelings and experience while they order, buy, or use a product, enter, and control market share, increase profitability and ensure initial and repeated purchases, the brand experience becomes key (Tang & Tsang, 2020). Therefore, we hypothesized:

H3: Brand experience has a positive impact on emotional attachment.

2.8 | Emotional attachment and brand loyalty

Emotional attachment is a connection between a customer and a brand (Husain, Paul & Koles, 2022; Japutra et al., 2018). Where brand loyalty indicates the long-term commitment of consumers towards a brand, (Reichheld, 1996), customers' emotional engagement underlines their emotions, love, and affection for brands (Thomson et al., 2005).

Fedorikhin et al. (2008) found attachment to be a significant determinant of loyalty. Grisaffe and Nguyen (2011) in their study reported that consumers who are attached to the brand emotionally demonstrate brand loyalty. Thomson et al. (2005) stated that consumers' deep affection, a pleasant experience, and personal association with the brand (Shahid & Paul, 2021) strengthen their closeness with the brand, resulting in brand loyalty (Park et al., 2010). He et al. (2012) states that brand loyalty is a result of consumers' inclination and emotional attachment towards a brand.

Building on emotional attachment theory, researchers (Boateng et al., 2020) believe that consumers can develop emotional attachment towards "luxury brands" (Jacob et al., 2020; Park et al., 2010). Emotionally attached consumers rely on factors like brand love, brand affection, and brand loyalty (Grisaffe & Nguyen, 2011). These characteristics suggest that customers with an 'effective emotional attachment' have a higher chance of staying connected to the brand for a longer period (Thomson et al., 2005), ensuring a confident and faithful customer. The reliability of this partnership has a substantial influence on the consumers' behavioural results and helps to maintain the brand's long-term profitability (Thomson et al., 2005).

Furthermore, studies also show that consumers with high involvement and more experience with the product demonstrate loyalty towards it (Holland & Menzel Baker, 2001). The literature puts forward that luxury stores should build an atmosphere of adoration, reverence, and uniqueness (Thompson & Arsel, 2004) that could help consumers to develop an emotional bond (Choi et al., 2016; Dion & Borraz, 2017). An individual's emotional attachment reflects their commitment (Garbarino & Johnson, 1999). Batat (2017) suggests that luxury marketers should make luxury in-store shopping profoundly immersive, which could lead to a long-term relationship. Therefore, we propose:

H4: Emotional attachment with the brand has a positive impact on brand loyalty.

2.9 | Moderating effect of store image

The store environment builds a comprehensive emotional experience established on sensory attributes, designs, and customer engagement that are exhilarating and appealing (Foroudi et al., 2020). Image is characterized as a set of essential components of a specific store that are evaluated across one another. Lindquist (1974) states store image as a consumer's overall impression of a store. Store image is delineated as "the total impression represented in the memory as a gestalt of perceived attributes associated with the store" (Hartman & Spiro, 2005; pp: 1113). The store image is replicated in its physical environment, perceived service quality, merchandise perception, and type of store (Dolbec & Chebat, 2013). Because of its consistency throughout time, store image is a dependable and reliable cue (Delgado-Ballester et al., 2014). Olshavsky (1985) stated that store image is a good indicator of a brand's quality and vice-versa (Collins-Dodd & Lindley, 2003). Many studies on store image focused on the attributes creating its marketing image (Desmichel & Kocher, 2020). Building on Sheth's shopping patronage theory and Workman and Cho (2013) literature, store image act as a nonfunctional need of consumers that helps in achieving experiential goals.

Store image from a consumer perspective is measured based on the store's performance. Moreover, store image has a crucial influence on consumers' purchase decisions and assists retail managers in identifying those customers who they anticipate will buy a product from a specific store (Huddleston et al., 2015). A study by Pan and Zinkhan (2006) outlined that store image delivers confidence, familiarity, recognition, and connection that make it easy for consumers to determine whether to try or repurchase the products. When consumers have a favourable impression of the brand, their evaluation will have a positive influence on the store's image. Burlison and Oe (2018) found in their literature review study that store image is a critical variable in the way people behave. Moreover, when it comes to interacting with customers, a store's image is crucial. Researchers (Bloemer & Ruyter, K., 1998; Purohit & Srivastava, 2001) stated that brands with a positive store image continue to sustain the marketing advantage and raise the store's valence in the eyes of the customers. Yoo et al. (2000) believe that in

the case of store brands, a positive and consistent relationship exists between the store image and the store. Some researchers (Roggeveen et al., 2020) have stated that sensory experience could moderate the consumer's perceived value, and a positive store image can attract customers to the store. So, we hypothesized:

H5a: Store image moderates the relationship between sensory marketing cues and brand experience such that the relationship will be stronger when store image is high, but it is weaker when store image is low.

H5b: Store image moderates the relationship between sensory marketing cues and emotional attachment will be stronger when store image is high, but it is weaker when store image is low.

H5c: Store image moderates the relationship between brand experience; emotional attachment will be stronger when store image is high and weaker when store image is low.

3 | STUDY 1

3.1 | Participant and procedures

A total of 516 respondents took part in the survey, yielding a response rate of 55%. After screening the returned surveys, a total of 409 questionnaires were found fit for the final study. The data was collected during the summers of 2020, from luxury customers living in New Delhi and Mumbai. The participants of the study were asked three key questions. First, have they purchased luxury products in the recent past. The luxury brand stores that were included in this study were Armani, Burberry, Chanel, Dior, Gucci, Jimmy Choo, Louis Vuitton, Salvatore Ferragamo. These stores were selected based on their physical presence in India. Second, the respondents were asked whether the purchase they made was an in-store purchase or an online purchase. If the participant agreed they purchased luxury products from the store, then they were asked to recall their luxury store visit and their experience at the store. Third, based on the recalled experience they were asked to fill out the questionnaire which included the questions about the variables under study. Due to pandemic and closed stores, the authors opted to assess the response by asking the respondents to recall their experience during their visit to luxury stores.

The respondents who participated in the study were between the age group of 22–45 years. The gender distribution was almost equal (54.3% females and 45.7% males). Regarding education level, 48.4% of respondents were graduates, and 51.6% were postgraduates or higher, with 57.2% of respondents working full-time in the corporate sector. A total of 45% of respondents' annual income was USD 20k or below, and the rest 55% had income more than USD 20k. Most of the respondents belonged to the business class (39%) or held a senior position in the corporate sector (37%). More than 75% of respondents preferred purchasing luxury products from stores, with 42% of respondents visiting these stores at least once a month, and 34% of respondents visiting them 5–6 times within 3 months (before the pandemic).

3.2 | Measure

The constructs used in this study were borrowed from previous marketing studies and we recorded all the responses on a 5-point Likert scale (ranging from “1: strongly disagree” to “5: strongly agree”). The sensory marketing cues were assessed using the scale by Wiedmann et al. (2018). The brand experience was assessed using a scale developed by Brakus et al. (2009). Customers' emotional attachment with the brand was recorded using a scale implemented by Thomson et al. (2005), and brand loyalty by Keller (2001); Aaker (1996).

Before conducting the main survey, the questionnaire was pretested on a sample of 40 doctoral students to correct any difficulties in readability and clarification. Diverse methodological solutions for controlling standard method variance were also assessed. First, the items to be measured were thoroughly examined for ambiguity and unfamiliar words, using a combination order of questions. Second, the study's participants were guaranteed anonymity and confidentiality regarding the responses (Podsakoff et al., 2003). No personal information (i.e., name, phone number, address, and so on) was collected. The respondents were informed that there were no right or wrong answers. Third, to eliminate retrospective bias, the survey was also shared with three academicians and two luxury experts for face validity, and measures were improved based on their recommendations (Roese & Vohs, 2012). Last, we statistically evaluated standard common method variance (CMV) through the common latent factor (CLF) method (Podsakoff et al., 2003).

3.3 | Results

Because we collected data on both the outcome and the explanatory variables from the same respondent, it is crucial to check for common variance across all observed variables in the model. Hence, Harman's one-factor test was performed. The variance showed a single factor was 24.37%, which was less than the 50% threshold. Thus, no common method bias issue was found in the data (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Moreover, to check the CMV, we used the CLF analysis to see how the constructs' regression weights differ with and without CLF (Podsakoff et al., 2003). The change in the regression weights was observed to be relatively low (<0.5); therefore, no CMB issues were reported (Gaskin, 2017).

SEM was used to analyse the hypothesized relationship. The reliability of the model was assessed using Cronbach's alpha and construct reliability (CR). Both the values were higher than the minimum threshold of 0.70, indicating construct validity (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988). Further, both convergent validity (critical ratio and average variance extracted >0.50 for all items) and discriminant validity (“square root of each construct's AVE” surpassed the inter-construct correlations of its associated constructs) (Fornell & Larcker, 1981) were confirmed by the model results (See Table 1). The CFA results ($\chi^2/df = 1.125$; Comparative fit index [CFI] = 0.98; Normed fit index

Variable	Mean	Cronbach α	CR	AVE	MSV	EMA	BLO	SM	BE
EMA	4.08	0.88	0.88	0.52	0.29	0.72			
BLO	3.90	0.86	0.86	0.60	0.25	0.50***	0.78		
SMC	4.03	0.90	0.83	0.55	0.29	0.54***	0.42***	0.74	
BE	4.04	0.88	0.85	0.58	0.19	0.44***	0.35***	0.25***	0.77

TABLE 1 Correlation matrix (Study 1)

Note: Values marked with asterisk indicate correlation significance at 0.001 level; $N = 409$. Square roots of the average variance extracted are shown (in bold) on the diagonal of the matrix.

Abbreviations: BE, brand experience; BLO, brand loyalty; EMA, emotional attachment; SMC, sensory marketing cues.

Hypotheses	β	t values	Decision
H1: Sensory Marketing Cues \rightarrow Brand Experience	0.26	3.91	Supported
H2: Sensory Marketing Cues \rightarrow Emotional Attachment	0.41	5.68	Supported
H3: Brand Experience \rightarrow Emotional Attachment	0.58	7.38	Supported
H4: Emotional Attachment \rightarrow Brand Loyalty	0.60	8.85	Supported

TABLE 2 Hypotheses testing results (Study 1)

[NFI] = 0.90; Goodness of fit index [GFI] = 0.91; Tucker–Lewis Index [TLI] = 0.98; and Root mean square error of approximation [RMSEA] = 0.01) also shows a good fit model.

After CFA, SEM was used to test the data. The model fit indices ($\chi^2 = 789.759$, $df = 690$, $\chi^2/df = 1.145$, CFI = 0.987, NFI = 0.904, GFI = 0.912, TLI = 0.986, and RMSEA = 0.019) exhibited a good fit to the data. Concerning hypotheses testing, the results (see Table 2) revealed that the proposed hypotheses from H1 to H4 are all supported. H1 explored impact of sensory marketing cues on brand experience ($\beta = 0.26$; $t = 3.90$, $p < 0.05$). The results indicate that in-store sensory marketing cues have a favourable impact on consumers' brand experience, as stated by researchers in the past (Hultén, 2011; Schmitt, 1999; Wiedmann et al., 2018). Thus, the relevance of consumer sensory cues is emphasized to produce an effective and engaging brand experience. H2 indicates a positive relationship between sensory marketing cues and emotional attachment ($\beta = 0.56$; $t = 7.37$, $p < 0.05$). The results indicate that sensory marketing is used to develop an emotional attachment to the brand (Hultén, 2011). H3 indicates a significant relationship between brand experience and emotional attachment ($\beta = 0.41$; $t = 5.67$, $p < 0.05$). The results indicate that emotional attachment to a brand can develop over time as a result of in-store brand experience (Brakus et al., 2009). H4 explored a positive relationship between emotional attachment and brand loyalty ($\beta = 0.60$; $t = 8.85$, $p < 0.05$). That is, the customers become more emotionally dependent on brands due to their emotional attachment (Park et al., 2010), and as a result brand loyalty develops. Thus, the results supported our hypotheses. The findings of Study 1 are interesting and encouraging but leave unanswered questions such as (i) whether the effect of sensory marketing cues and brand experience on emotional attachment in the luxury retail channel environment is consistent across the different samples and real-time luxury experiences and (ii) whether

the effect of the aforementioned variables varies with the intervening effect of store image? These gaps provided the motivation for conducting Study 2.

4 | STUDY 2

4.1 | Participants

Study 2 was designed to find more evidence for the results obtained in Study 1 (e.g., that sensory marketing cues and brand experiences lead to emotional attachment) and to go one step deeper to test the moderating effect of store image. Since in Study 1, respondents were asked to recall their in-store experience, we found the real-time experience of the respondents missing. Therefore, in Study 2, the respondents were contacted either in the luxury store (permission was taken from the store manager and respondents) or coming out from the luxury store. The brands included in this study were Chanel, Dior, Louis Vuitton, Jimmy Choo, Burberry, and Gucci. These consumers either had shopping bags in their hands or stated that they had purchased the luxury products in the last 6 months. The real-time settings will affect the emotional state of the consumers and will influence their shopping behaviour response. These respondents were briefed about the purpose of the study and were asked to share their in-store experience based on the variables under study. After dropping/deleting the surveys with missing values, 294 responses were found to be valid for testing the hypothesized relationships. Like Study 1, the data for Study 2 was also collected from two major metropolitan cities of India (New Delhi and Mumbai) during the summer of 2020 using the mall-intercept method. The demographic profile of the respondents was between the age group of 22–45 years. The gender distribution was 58.8% female and 41.2%, male. Regarding

TABLE 3 Correlation matrix (Study 2)

Variable	Mean	Cronbach α	CR	AVE	MSV	SM	BE	EA	SI
SMC	4.12	0.93	0.94	0.50	0.27	0.71			
BE	3.21	0.93	0.93	0.54	0.21	0.17**	0.73		
EA	3.96	0.92	0.93	0.67	0.27	0.52***	0.45***	0.81	
SI	3.22	0.91	0.94	0.81	0.14	0.06	0.37***	0.16**	0.89

Note: Values marked with ** and *** asterisk indicate correlation significance at 0.01 and 0.001 level respectively; $N = 294$. Square roots of the average variance extracted are shown (in bold) on the diagonal of the matrix.

Abbreviations: AVE, average variance extracted; BE, brand experience; CR, composite reliability; EA, emotional attachment; MSV, maximum shared squared variance; SI, store image; SM, sensory marketing cues.

education level, 52.7% of respondents were graduates, and 47.3% were postgraduates or higher, with 50.7% of respondents working full-time in the corporate sector. 56.5% of respondents' annual income was USD 20k or below, and 43.5% of income was more than USD 20k. 49.3% of respondents belong to the business class, and 63.8% of respondents held a senior position in the corporate sector. A total of 57% of respondents visited these stores at least once a month, and more than 80% of respondents said that they preferred purchasing luxury products in-store.

4.2 | Measures

The constructs for the study were based on established scales using 5-point Likert scales (ranging from "1: strongly disagree" to "5: strongly agree"). Sensory marketing cues are assessed using scale by Wiedmann et al. (2018); brand experience by Brakus et al. (2009); store image by Grewal et al. (1998); and emotional attachment by Thomson et al. (2005).

To control common method bias, (i) a pretesting of the questionnaire was undertaken for ambiguity and unfamiliar words. This survey was even shared with luxury experts and academicians for face validity. Measures were improved based on their recommendations (Roese & Vohs, 2012), (ii) the respondents were assured of their anonymity and confidentiality (Podsakoff et al., 2003), and (iii) for statistical analysis, the CLF method was adopted (Podsakoff et al., 2003).

4.3 | Results

The structural equation modelling was conducted to analyse the hypothesised relationships. The model's reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha and CR. The values ranged from 0.93 to 0.94 and were higher than the minimum threshold of 0.70 in both cases, indicating construct validity (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988). Further, the model indicated confirmation for convergent validity (critical ratio and average variance extracted were >0.50 for all items, ranging from and discriminant validity ("square root of each construct's AVE"

exceeded its corresponding inter-construct correlations) (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). See Table 3 for detailed results.

CFA results exhibited acceptable model fit ($\chi^2/df = 2.84$; CFI = 0.88; GFI = 0.76; TLI = 0.86; and RMSEA = 0.07). Further, to check the CMV, we used the CLF analysis to see how the constructs' regression weights differ with and without CLF (Podsakoff et al., 2003). The change in the regression weights was observed to be relatively low (<0.5), except for three variables. Therefore, we decided to retain the CLF for our structural model (Gaskin, 2017).

Moreover, as reflected by the SEM results values ($\chi^2 = 1920.51$, $df = 690$, $\chi^2/df = 2.78$, CFI = 0.89, NFI = 0.82, TLI = 0.88, and RMSEA = 0.06), the model exhibited an acceptable fit for the data. We further tested the hypotheses from H1 to H3 and H5 (see Table 4a). H1 indicated sensory marketing has a significant impact on brand experience ($\beta = 0.41$; $t = 2.82$, $p < 0.05$), H2 explored the positive relationship between sensory marketing and emotional attachment ($\beta = 0.67$; $t = 5.14$, $p < 0.05$), H3 indicated that brand experience leads to emotional attachment ($\beta = 0.42$; $t = 6.71$, $p < 0.05$). These results supported our hypotheses, further indicating that in real-time settings the impact is more significant. Further, the moderating role (see Table 4b) of store image was explored (H5a–H5c) using Hayes Macro Process. For Hypothesis H5a, the interaction term was found to be nonsignificant ($\beta = 0.036$, $p = ns.$), thus H5a was not supported. For H5b, the interaction term was significant ($\beta = 0.130$, $p < 0.05$), suggesting store image significantly moderates the link between sensory marketing cues and emotional attachment. Likewise, the interaction effect of brand experience and emotional attachment on store image was found to be significant ($\beta = 0.120$, $p < 0.05$), suggesting store image moderates the relationship between brand experience and emotional attachment. Our results for moderation analysis further show that emotional attachment and sensory marketing cues relationship is strengthened when store image is high ($\beta = 0.737$, $t = 8.570^{***}$) compared to when store image is low ($\beta = 0.693$, $t = 0.7915^{***}$). Emotional attachment is better captured by store brand experience when store image is high ($\beta = 0.629$, $t = 7.363^{***}$) than for a low store image ($\beta = 0.534$, $t = 6.342^{***}$).

Collectively, Studies 1 and 2 revealed that sensory marketing cues and brand experiences have a positive impact on emotional attachment and subsequently brand loyalty in a luxury retail store setting. Further, the store brand image contributes to strengthening

Hypotheses	β	t values	Decision
H1: Sensory Marketing Cue → Brand Experience	0.41	2.82	Supported
H2: Sensory Marketing Cues → Emotional Attachment	0.67	5.13	Supported
H3: Brand Experience → Emotional Attachment	0.42	6.71	Supported

TABLE 4 Hypotheses testing results (Study 2)

H	Path	Overall interaction effect (t value)	Low store image (t value)	High store image (t value)
H5a	SMC → BE	0.036 (0.587) ^{ns}	0.175 (2.094)*	0.242 (2.947)**
H5b	SMC → EA	0.130 (1.95)*	0.693 (7.915)***	0.737 (8.570)***
H5c	BE → EA	0.120 (1.98)*	0.534 (6.342)***	0.629 (7.363)***

TABLE 4b Moderating effect of store image (Study 2)

Note: ns = nonsignificance. *Significant at the 0.05 level, **Significant at the 0.01 level, ***Significant at the 0.001 level.

Abbreviations: BE, brand experience; EA, emotional attachment; SMC, sensory marketing cues.

the relationships among the variables studied. The findings of the above-mentioned studies are interesting and promising, yet leaves some unanswered questions such as (i) whether the effect of sensory marketing cues and brand experience on emotional attachment and subsequent brand loyalty is consistent across cultural settings, and (ii) whether these variables had any effect on emotional attachment and loyalty when participants were assigned to low (vs. high) sensory marketing cues and low (vs. high brand experience) conditions, and (iii) whether store type moderates these relationships? These research gaps provided the impetus for a field experiment study.

5 | STUDY 3

We designed experiment 1 (i.e., Study 3) to find more evidence for the results obtained in Studies 1 and 2 by examining whether sensory marketing cues and brand experiences lead to emotional attachment and subsequent store brand loyalty. We manipulated sensory marketing cues and brand experiences assigning participants in luxury versus nonluxury store conditions which have low versus high sensory marketing cues and brand experiences. In addition, Study 3 examined the moderating effect of store type in these relationships.

5.1 | Pretest

Before the main study, we conducted a pilot study in which four luxury store brands were selected from a pool of 12 (e.g., Maria B. with high sensory marketing cues vs. Khaadi with low sensory marketing cues, and Armani with high brand experiences vs. Gul Ahmed with low brand experiences) through a focus group with three luxury branding researchers. Another pretest with 35 participants ($M_{\text{age}} = 29.371$ years; 22 males, 13 females) was also conducted. They were asked to rank the effectiveness of the above-mentioned luxury retail brands in terms of brand experiences and sensory marketing cues, with 1 being the weakest

and 5 being the strongest. Surprisingly, the outcomes of consumer surveys and focus groups were very similar. Maria B, in particular, is thought to be stronger than Khaadi. On a 5-point scale, Maria B's perceived sensory marketing cues have a mean value of 4.77, while Khaadi's perceived sensory marketing cues have a mean value of 2.26. Similarly, Armani is thought to be stronger than Gul Ahmed. On a 5-point scale, Armani's perceived brand experience has a mean value of 4.91, while Gul Ahmed's perceived brand experience has a mean value of 1.83. In light of these findings, the current study pairs Maria B and Armani, who have high sensory marketing cues and high brand experiences, against Khaadi and Gul Ahmed, who have weak sensory marketing cues and low brand experiences.

5.2 | Method: Main study

A total of 139 young consumers ($M_{\text{age}} = 28.99$ years; 84 males, 55 females) from big retail outlets in Pakistan took part in the study in exchange for small gifts. First, all participants were randomly allocated to one of two conditions: the nonluxury condition (e.g., low sensory marketing cues and low brand experience, Khaadi and Gul Ahmed) or the luxury store condition (e.g., high sensory marketing cues and high brand experience, Maria B and Armani). After evaluating the assigned conditions, we asked respondents to fill a survey that mapped into dependent (e.g., brand loyalty), independent (sensory marketing cues and brand experience), mediating (e.g., emotional attachment), and moderating variable (e.g., store image/store type). All the scale items were identical to those used in Studies 1 and 2.

5.3 | Results

A simple linear regression shows a considerable positive impact of sensory marketing cues on brand experience ($\beta = 0.302$, $t = 3.715^{**}$), supporting H1. Likewise, our results show a significant positive effect of

sensory marketing cues ($\beta = 0.169$, $t = 2.702^{**}$) and brand experience ($\beta = 0.648$, $t = 5.128^{***}$) on emotional attachment, supporting H2–H3. Additionally, our results reveal that emotional attachment had a significantly positive effect on brand loyalty ($\beta = 0.805$, $t = 15.905^{***}$), supporting H4. These results conceptually replicate the focal effects and increase the generalizability of findings across different cultural settings. The one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) revealed a main effect of condition for H1 ($F_{\text{Sensory marketing cues}} = 19.069$, $p \leq 0.001$; $F_{\text{Brand experience}} = 151.684$, $p \leq 0.001$), such that participants in the luxury store condition (e.g., Maria B and Armani) exhibited greater sensory marketing cues ($M = 4.375$) and brand experience ($M = 4.465$) than did participants in the non-luxury store condition (e.g., Khaadi and Gul Ahmed) condition ($M_{\text{Sensory marketing cues}} = 3.642$, $M_{\text{Brand experience}} = 2.375$). Similarly, we observed significant conditions for H2–H4, participants in the luxury store condition (e.g., Maria B and Armani) exhibited greater emotional attachment ($F = 290.188$, $p \leq 0.001$; $M = 4.440$) and brand loyalty ($F = 287.796$, $p \leq 0.001$; $M = 4.496$) than the participants in the nonluxury store (e.g., Khaadi and Gul Ahmed) condition ($M_{\text{emotional attachment}} = 1.987$, $M_{\text{Brand loyalty}} = 1.856$). These results conceptually replicate the pattern observed in the above-discussed results that the consumers expressed stronger sensory marketing cues, brand experience, emotional attachment, and brand loyalty in the luxury store environment such as Maria B and Armani than did the consumers in the non-luxury store environment such as Khaadi and Gul Ahmed.

To test the moderating effect of store image, we first conducted the one-way ANOVA which revealed a significant condition by store image ($F = 358.912$, $p \leq 0.001$), suggesting that store image indeed moderated the focal effects. Specifically, ANOVA results indicate that consumers exposed to luxury store conditions (e.g., Maria B and Armani) exhibited greater store image than did consumers exposed to nonluxury stores conditions (e.g., Khaadi and Gul Ahmed). To further validate these findings, we used SPSS MACRO (Model 1) to test the moderation effect of store image on the relationship between sensory marketing cues and brand experience on emotional attachment. Our results show a significant interaction effect of sensory marketing cues and store images on emotional attachment ($\beta = 0.109$, $t = 2.094$, $p \leq 0.05$). The results of conditional process analysis indicate that the effect of sensory marketing cues on emotional attachment is stronger when the image of the luxury store is higher ($\beta = 0.401$, $t = 3.098$, $p \leq 0.01$) but not when the store has low image ($\beta = 0.069$, $t = 0.764$, $p = \text{ns}$). In a similar vein, our results show a significant interaction effect of brand experience and store images on emotional attachment ($\beta = 0.120$, $t = 2.836$, $p \leq 0.01$). The conditional process analysis further revealed that the effect of brand experience on emotional attachment is greater when the image of the store is high ($\beta = 0.554$, $t = 5.145$, $p \leq 0.001$) than when the store has low image ($\beta = 0.188$, $t = 2.431$, $p \leq 0.05$).

6 | GENERAL DISCUSSION

Through a series of three studies that use both field and experimental data, we present definite evidence that sensory marketing cues and brand experience play a crucial role in the environment of luxury

retail stores. To the authors' knowledge, this is the first study to test a theoretically based model of the impact of sensory marketing cues and brand experience on emotional attachment and subsequent brand loyalty in the luxury retail channel environment using shopping patronage theory and inference theory. Further, the use of store image as a moderator provides a new perspective, as the store image may assist marketers in building a strong brand that might increase the consumers' purchase behavior.

The SEM results from Studies 1 to 2 supported all formulated hypotheses. The results emphasized the strong role played by sensory marketing cues in establishing emotional attachment, whether it's for consumers recalling their experience from the store visit ($\beta_{\text{study1}} = 0.41$) or consumers exiting luxury stores ($\beta_{\text{study2}} = 0.67$). The findings show that consumer emotions are strengthened, soothed, and enhanced via sensory marketing cues and all senses should be used to engage customer emotions with a product or brand. Brand experience also helps in connecting the consumers emotionally ($\beta_{\text{study1}} = 0.58$; $\beta_{\text{study2}} = 0.42$). Brakus et al. (2009) state that emotions are elicited by experiences generated by brand-related stimuli. Brand experiences that are distinctive and memorable elicit powerful emotional responses and may leave emotional imprints on customers' memories. As consumer experience with a brand grows, they develop emotional attachments to it. This affective component of a brand is represented by brand attachment, which includes emotional states.

Emotional attachment is also one of the factors that influence brand loyalty. Study 1 results add to the understanding of how customers connect with the brands and become brand loyal, offering significance for brand managers. In Study 2 the moderating role of store image is studied. Consumers link stores with their thoughts and feelings. These overall perceptions have a significant impact on their purchase and patronage behaviour. High store image indicates that consumers extract benefits from the store and the store environment. The findings highlighted these complicated linkages and added them to both theory and practice.

7 | IMPLICATIONS FOR THEORY

In this paper, we examined the impact of sensory marketing cues and brand experience on emotional attachment and subsequently brand loyalty for luxury consumers. Based on our findings, sensory marketing cues affects brand experience and emotional attachment, which has a strong influence on brand loyalty. However, the impact of these relationships was stronger in Study 2 compared to Study 1. This implies that when customers were asked about their experience right after they left the store (i.e., in real-time settings), it was more positive. This indicates that in-store experience (based on sensory marketing cues and brand experience) creates an emotional attachment with customers, and this is more effective in building consumer loyalty.

Our results findings also confirm the moderating role of store image in influencing the relationship between sensory marketing cues

and brand experience and emotional attachment. For example, for brands having a highly positive store image, the sensory marketing cues and brand experience are contributing towards a strong emotional attachment relationship but less so for low store image. This study contributes to the increasing knowledge base on sensory cues, brands, and experience, that many experts have previously urged researchers to investigate (Brakus et al., 2009; Krishna, 2011; Wiedmann et al., 2018). Our findings offer important theoretical contributions.

First, this study enhances the theoretical contribution and brings together shopping patronage theory and inference theory in terms of luxury consumers' in-store experience. These theories helped in conceptualizing the model for our study. Based on these theories our variables were interlinked and measured. The patronage theory states that startling events at a store may influence experience (brand experience) and emotions (emotional attachment) and inference theory states that consumers' startling events (sensory marketing cues) are a result of atmospheric signals (store image). Thus, broadening previous literature by constructing relationships between sensory marketing cues, brand experience, store image, emotional attachment, and brand loyalty in a luxury retail channel environment. Although sensory marketing is considered one of the essential strategies of marketing, there is limited research on the impact of sensory marketing cues in the luxury retail environment (Godey et al., 2009). Therefore, this work adds to the existing pool of previous research by furnishing a coherent apprehension of these relationships.

Second, align with previous literature (Spence et al., 2014), our study suggests that the sensory marketing cues in luxury stores affect the perception and behaviour of shoppers individually, and their cumulative effect is possibly much higher than the sum of their parts. Furthermore, our empirical results support the belief that the sensory marketing cues exhibit a positive influence to evoke a memorable brand experience (Wiedmann et al., 2018). Relevantly, sensory, behavioural, and cognitive brand interactions are more important (Hepola et al., 2017) in reinforcing the emotional connection involving a customer and a brand, as well as in increasing brand loyalties.

Third, though online platforms are growing, luxury consumers exhibited the desire to visit stores versus shopping online. These findings indicate that luxury retailers should emphasize higher symbolic and functional benefits to their consumers, which could help in building a strong emotional attachment to accomplish brand loyalty (Grisaffe & Nguyen, 2011). As consumers become increasingly dependent on these brands, customer service and personal attention lead consumers to become emotionally attached to these brands. A positive and significant influence of brand experience on brand loyalty was also reported, as the findings assist brand experience as an important aspect in building brand loyalty.

Last, the moderating role of store image indicates that the store atmosphere has a significant impact on consumer behaviour (Grewal et al., 1998). As the store image reflects the aesthetic appeal and brand's prestigious image, it can be used to influence consumers'

emotions and increase purchase probability. As the consumers expect luxury stores to have an enticing store ambiance that adds to the brand's prestige, it should appeal to the emotional and cognitive layers of the customers' brains.

8 | MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

This research has significant managerial implications. First, the consumer journey has evolved into a sensory adventure. Sensory cues should provide shoppers with more engaging brand experiences. In compliance with the significant findings of sensory marketing cues and brand experience, it is recommended for luxury marketers to use multiple senses diligently in the luxury store environment, so the consumers would crave for next experience. Further, consumers who like to indulge themselves in the world of luxury are mostly looking for an environment that can activate their senses in a special way (Kauppinen-Räsänen et al., 2020). As a result, we emphasize the value of engaging customer senses, stimulating their in-store moods, and making their retail experience engaging and unforgettable.

Second, as brand experience plays an essential role in extruding achievement and building a closer bond between the customers and the brand, luxury marketers can bewitch this experience by investing in store atmospherics. Furthermore, by differentiating their stores with signature fragrances, music playlists, window displays, the retailers can offer functional benefits to their consumers. Moreover, stimulating customers through music and bright colours (Holbrook & Gardner, 1993) creates a positive impact on store profit. This exposure is compelling when it comes to luxury stores, as the characteristics of this sector are such that superior, memorable, and unique brand experiences aid in promoting brand trust, gratifying consumers, nurturing brand loyalty, building consumer attitude, and brand credibility.

Third, consumers' emotional attachment to the brand indicates their connection and loyalty to the brand. Emotionally attached consumers remain loyal to the brand and are considered to be three times more valuable. So, it is essential for luxury marketers to understand that luxury consumers associate the products with their personalities. Moreover, a luxury product is frequently associated with a memorable time or a significant accomplishment that customers wish to cherish. It is also a good idea for marketers to understand which elements can aid in the formation of these kinds of partnerships (emotional attachment and brand loyalty). Luxury marketers will find this information useful in determining the extent to which consumers and brands are linked. This information will equip luxury marketers with strategies and tactics to serve customers better.

Fourth, luxury stores are more than a distribution platform. One of the most distinguishing characteristics of luxury stores is their aesthetic attractiveness. They are seen as creative representations that showcase elegantly made products and successfully integrate sensory cues into their brand identity, enhancing consumers' sensorially immersive experience (Joy et al., 2014). Further, luxury

stores carry a high-gloss image, that enhances the feelings and emotions of the consumers. The store images can boost the relationship of customers with the brand. Consumers expect luxury stores to have highly appealing store designs to add to the brand's stature. Therefore, the environment should be pleasant, so consumers are likely to shop for a longer time in the stores. So, marketers should understand that the sentiments conveyed by store image should go beyond the aesthetic appeal of the product and penetrate the emotional and psychological layers of the minds of the customers.

9 | LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Like any other research, this study has some limitations. This implies that there are several opportunities for future research. First, the antecedents and their relationships were examined in luxury stores, so future researchers can test them in different service sectors or specific brand stores, restaurants, etc. Furthermore, to truly articulate sensory marketing tactics, a single sense should be activated at a time. Second, the model was developed after examining the existing literature on sensory marketing and brand experience; however, the possibility of other constructs cannot be ignored entirely. Therefore, including other constructs and examining their relationship in the luxury store context can be considered. Studying constructs like shopper's involvement which can trigger consumers' feelings and increase their preferences and purchase likelihood; customer satisfaction which indicates that consumers derive satisfaction in stores not only from the products they purchase but also from the purchasing process; prior store experience which could delve deeper into consumers' store experience; or/and luxury store attributes that could deliver hedonic rewards and sensory pleasure through high-quality items and services and assist consumers to achieve status-seeking goals. Factors like crowding, market mobility, discounts/sales impact could also be explored. For example, during sales, stores see a more substantial footfall. Moreover, shoppers' experiences could also differ based on the purchases made. Luxury store size could also be of relevance in luxury retailing. Thirdly, demographic factors play an essential role in consumer perception and the decision-making processes and may contribute to important insights and implications for favourable branding strategies. Therefore, the analysis of respondents' demographics could give useful ideas. Last, qualitative studies could delve into effective customization of the questionnaire items and accurate measurement of the themes related to the in-store experience. The themes can be linked to the hypotheses that the research aims to endorse and may contribute to the discovery of new theories or the updating of older theories. Moreover, mixed methodology, the triangulation approach, or meta-analysis, could also help provide more insights into the complexity and effectiveness of customer experience. Last, future researchers can also study multibrand and single-brand store experiences as both formats give their customers a unique and distinct shopping experience.

10 | CONCLUSION

To conclude, the study's findings suggest that sensory marketing cues and brand experience play an important role in the luxury retail channel environment to connect consumers emotionally to the brand, thereby ensuring brand loyalty. When people form a strong emotional connection with brands, businesses reap the financial rewards. This emotional underpinning of loyal repurchasing is strongly aligned with emotional attachment with brands. As a result, this study can help luxury marketers who are aiming to increase brand loyalty and connect with their consumers on an emotional level. Further the results exhibit that store image plays a critical role in forming a relationship between a consumer and a brand.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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