



Sensory marketing in e-commerce: challenges and successes (Freshly Cosmetics)

Marketing sensorial en el comercio electrónico: desafíos y éxitos
(Freshly Cosmetics)

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Abstract

This study builds on a previous analysis and assessment of the application of sensory marketing in e-commerce. The aim in this article is to examine the use and limitations of sensory marketing tools on business websites. The study consists of a bibliographic review of the most common sensory strategies and a specific case study of the natural cosmetics company Freshly Cosmetics, whose online marketing model has made the brand a leader in the sector. The results show that recent new trends in purchasing behaviour have forced companies to adapt by updating their website design using digital marketing techniques and by improving their online positioning.

Keywords: sensory marketing, experience, consumer, e-commerce, digitalization

Resumen

Estudio que surge del análisis previo que detecta la necesidad de evaluar la aplicación del marketing sensorial en el e-commerce. Bajo esta premisa se establece el objetivo

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How to cite this article: Siller Bermejo, C. (2025). Sensory marketing in e-commerce: challenges and successes (Freshly Cosmetics). *Redmarka. Revista de Marketing Aplicado*, Vol 29, No. 1, 1-18. <https://doi.org/10.17979/redma.2025.29.1.11745>

principal de estudiar las herramientas del marketing sensorial y su posible aplicación en las páginas webs empresariales, siendo conscientes de las limitaciones que existen en el mundo digital. Para conseguir los resultados de estudio se establece una revisión bibliográfica sobre las estrategias sensoriales más recurrentes. Para completar la información se expone un caso de éxito, la empresa de cosmética natural, *Freshly Cosmetics*, cuyas actuaciones *online* han posicionado a la marca como un referente. Se concluye que en los últimos tiempos han aparecido nuevas tendencias en el comportamiento de compra y las empresas se han visto obligadas a adaptarse, actualizando el diseño de la estructura de sus páginas web mediante la utilización de técnicas de marketing digital y otorgando gran importancia al posicionamiento *online*.

Palabras clave: marketing sensorial, experiencia, consumidor, e-commerce, digitalización

1. INTRODUCTION

Research that arises as a result of evaluating the challenges facing sensory marketing in its adaptation to e-commerce. Over the last decade, the development of the digital world has become a very important attraction for any business, with a high percentage of sales conversion, hence its relevance when researching this branch of digital marketing in order to achieve a good shopping experience for the consumer. In an increasingly digitalised environment, companies are aware of the importance of the customer's shopping experience in reactivating economic growth, as well as establishing a strategy to differentiate themselves from their competitors. To achieve a better relationship with the consumer through online channels, most businesses have opted for the use of data and how to integrate the business of experience into their entire strategy. In recent times, new trends in consumer buying behaviour have appeared and companies have been forced to adapt to this change, updating the design of the structure of their websites through the use of digital marketing techniques and giving great importance to online positioning.

1.1. Justification for the study

The purchase decision process can be defined as the set of activities carried out by one or more consumers, from the moment they feel a need to the moment they satisfy it by purchasing a product or service (Kotler and Armstrong, 2003).

In this sense, it is important to point out that throughout the purchase decision process it has been shown that the emotions and moods of the consumer directly influence their final decision, so that the purchase decision will not depend on a totally rational process, but rather, on many occasions, external sensory stimuli will condition the final purchase of the product or service (Pronto et al, 2008) as well as contributing to repeat purchases (Chebat et al, 2011).

These arguments have been defended in recent years by different authors such as Zeithaml (2012) and Hultén (2011), and have even been the subject of study from disciplines such as neuroscience, giving rise to what is currently known as neuromarketing.

Therefore, in this context, it is possible to affirm that companies can establish lasting connections with consumers through certain sensory stimuli with the aim of arousing positive emotions. These stimuli will also enable customer loyalty to the product.

This is why sensory marketing, understood as the use of sensory stimuli that are perceived by consumers through the senses with the aim of creating a particular environment, generates greater brand value for the customer and encourages purchase. 'Understanding the brand vision from sensory marketing allows us to visualise customers and non-customers in establishing emotional connections with all people even if they cannot think of accessing the product or service in the short term' (Gómez and Mejía, 2012).

In this line, sensory marketing strategies linked to communication have been integrated into digital media through websites, where companies have the opportunity to publicise products as well as brand values, hosting quality content, images of the products on sale, using tools to attract the consumer's attention. In addition, they facilitate interaction between companies and consumers, since, through the website, connections can be established and emotions can be aroused in the consumer.

Nowadays, the amount of time spent connected to mobile devices has increased, which is why companies must consider sensory marketing tools within their websites in order to connect with these users.

In this line, digital marketing transfers sensory marketing to the e-commerce model with the aim of optimising results through the transformation of its platforms and creating a web architecture aimed at a purchasing process that contributes to a positive experience, increasing the conversion rate and decreasing the bounce rate.

E-commerce is a reality that has revolutionised all sectors, from fashion to food. Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2014) already pointed out that e-commerce refers to 'financial and information transactions conducted electronically between an organisation and any third party with whom it has dealings'.

The emergence of electronic commerce or e-commerce has influenced the purchasing behaviour of users, as geographical barriers and timetables have been eliminated (López, 2014). Progressively more and more people carry out commercial transactions over the Internet, therefore, marketing in the online environment is constantly evolving and adapting to new consumer habits.

The visible part of the internet is the websites and e-commerce is a function of these. If a simple view of marketing is conceived in only four of its variables: product, price, distribution and promotion, the internet is in each of them and everything can be communicated through this medium (Barrientos, 2017). Moreover, if the company

updates the design of the website through e-commerce, it can improve its position in the market. Through the website, the company interacts with different types of customers, current and potential (Maciá, 2014).

Therefore, this research considers it important to observe the influence that new technologies have on consumer purchasing behaviour, as well as the evolution that e-commerce has undergone in recent years. It is also important to determine the keys to the success of online shopping portals, focusing mainly on the conversion rate. In this sense, the use of sensory marketing techniques that can contribute to improving business results in a web environment is analysed.

1.2. Objectives

Based on the arguments set out above, the main objective of the research is: GO1. To analyse the importance of e-commerce in the current environment for companies in order to determine whether sensory marketing is a digital communication tool that allows the optimisation of business results.

In turn, this objective is specified in the following specific objectives:

- SO1 – Review the evolution of e-commerce in recent years through a review of the literature.
- SO2 – Assess the importance of designing a digital marketing strategy in today's companies.
- SO3 – Study the importance of using sensory marketing techniques in the design of web pages. To this end, the natural cosmetics brand Freshly Cosmetics, a business success story, is taken as a reference.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Evolution and concept of sensory marketing: the sensory star

The speed and immediacy of social media (blogs, social networks, YouTube, etc.) have undoubtedly revolutionised communication. Content circulates at great speed and just as quickly becomes obsolete. This makes it necessary to build campaigns with much more promotional content than was used a few years ago (Benítez, 2013). This is why it is essential for communication and marketing professionals to try to understand what consumers expect from the changes in digital and social platforms and how these can enrich their shopping experience (Zevallos, 2014), taking into account that the Internet has changed the way in which people relate to entities or brands.

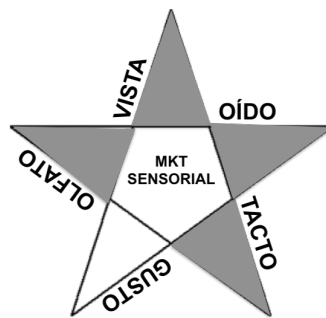
Traditionally, the way companies have managed to attract consumers to the brand or business has been through the use of various sensory marketing techniques at the physical point of sale. Where marketers use the various sensory marketing tools to stimulate the senses and attract more consumers to their shops, but the challenge is to attract them to the digital platform without penalising the customer.

Authors such as García and Lopera (2013) state that sensory marketing should be characterised as follows:

- Design of images that contribute to brand recall, bearing in mind that consumers remember images much more clearly than words.
- Choice of music appropriate to the brand's target audience. This resource can be used on two levels: conscious and unconscious. In any case, it should be aimed at creating a bond of trust between the customer and the company.
- Establishing an olfactory brand. Scent becomes a key element of seduction, but also, as will be seen later, it is fundamental in awakening memories in the consumer.
- Search for harmony of the elements. It is essential that all the sensory elements are in harmony, even when working from contrast, the type of customer the product or service is aimed at must be taken into account.
- Transforming brands into stories. Customers are looking for experiences to share with others. It is therefore important to build this experience.

One of the existing ways to understand how companies stimulate the senses is through the so-called 'Sensory Star', in which each of the senses; sight, hearing, touch, taste and smell, is represented by one of the peaks. This is a model that brands use to identify which senses they already have integrated into their marketing strategies and which ones they need to integrate in order to try to create a multi-sensory strategy, Figure 1.

Figure 1. Sensory Star Model (source: Mercado, 2017).



2.2. Evolution of sensory marketing at the point of sale towards new trends in digital marketing

Companies have used numerous sensory marketing techniques at the point of sale to attract customers in order to create a brand experience, and in turn, create a positive and lasting memory in the consumer's mind.

Given the technological revolution, companies have been forced to adopt new marketing techniques and apply them in the digital environment. They have been able

to do this through their web portals. As a result, sensory tools have evolved and integrated with digital marketing techniques.

"With the advent of e-commerce, it is changing the way companies compete. Nowadays, companies have to be where the consumer is and carry out their digital strategies there, in a much more planned and structured way to make them more effective. Most importantly, digital technology has changed the way to attract new customers and keep them over time" (Corrales, Coque & Brazales, 2017).

"The website is the fundamental pillar of digital marketing as it is the place where the company offers and sells its products and services. It is very important to have a professional website so that it generates enough trust so that potential customers are encouraged to have a business relationship with the company" (Corrales et al, 2017).

The website must be simple to use and intuitive with elements that facilitate and help the conversion of Internet users, i.e., that meets the final objective. The purpose of digital platforms is to achieve buyer retention, and this is achieved by analysing consumer behaviour, profile, reaction to stimuli, among others.

On the other hand, companies with a website should rely on it throughout the entire purchasing process: before, during, after and in subsequent customer relations.

For a website to be visited, it must be able to adapt to different access possibilities: loading lines with different speeds, multiple screen resolutions and formats, terminals such as computers, tablets, telephones and available browsers.

With the internet, marketing as we know it is changing; hence the company has to be aware of what is happening. Future actions have to be considered with things that are happening right now. Many actions have to be taken; however, one has to start by setting clear objectives regarding the possibilities of e-commerce and conclude with indicators that will guide and evaluate the actions that are determined (Barrientos, 2017).

Following the previous arguments, in order to correctly position a website it is necessary to focus on the design and the creative line of the company.

- The introduction of different formats such as videos, images, music, etc.
- Relational factor: both the customer and the company must have the opportunity to be in contact and exchange more personalised information. This can be done through chats, blogs, etc.
- Internet users access to carry out their activities and the purchasing options will be influenced by the possibilities of spaces offered by the site.
- The opportunity of mobilisation offered to consumers, so that they can be in the office, at home, on the bus, while shopping without having to go to the physical point of sale or neglect other tasks.
- Carefully analyse the content uploaded to the website, and take into account the possible effects (positive or negative) on the consumer.

2.3. Marketing techniques on digital platforms to create experiences: colours, call to actions and the web menu.

The sense of sight is the best known of all in marketing and the most exploited; it is estimated that 83% of the information that people retain is received visually (de Garcillán, 2015).

The play of colours in neuromarketing has an important value and it must be taken into account that all purchase decisions are made unconsciously through the senses. Through colours, different sensations can be generated in users, using the right set of colours on the website, according to the business strategy itself, can convey calm, purity, passion, warmth, etc.

In addition to colours, it is also important to work on other marketing techniques such as call to actions (CTA's). These tools are essential when it comes to attracting the consumer's attention by placing a button or banner on the web page. Thanks to CTA's, companies can get the user to click on the word or button to perform an immediate action. These actions can be; clicking on a banner, registering on a website, filling in a form, making a purchase, etc. In addition, the impact of these tools on users can be measured in real time. Understanding the effectiveness of the content uploaded on the web is like understanding which products are trending for the majority of users at that moment. To do this, it is necessary to take into account the number of clicks that Internet users make on the most popular products (Echevarría, 2008).

Another of the main sensory marketing tools most commonly used in digital marketing is the web menu, which is the structure of the web page that directs the flow of users within the page. That is, thanks to the categories that serve as a guide to quickly find the product that the customer is looking for.

On the other hand, video is one of the booming trends in digital marketing to boost communication and, with it, sales. This can reduce the process from three or four clicks to one. Gifs can also be used as moving images so that the user can better visualise every detail of the product, making it more real.

In addition to the tools mentioned above, companies also use digital marketing techniques to help them increase sales. These techniques are upselling and cross-selling. The main difference between the two is that cross-selling suggests products that are complementary to what the user is looking for. Upselling, on the other hand, invites the user to buy more expensive products than the ones he/she is looking at by offering products of a higher category.

For an online shop, cross-selling represents an increase in the sale of its products. In order for the company to carry out the cross-selling strategy properly, it must know its product catalogue perfectly in order to know which products can be complementary. Depending on the website, these suggestions can be included on each product page or at the end of the checkout process.

As observed in the digital field 'managers should rely on online analysis tools, which will allow them to review metrics, think about the objectives you are going to measure such as: completing a contact form, making a sale, seeing an ad, downloading a voucher with a promotion, among others, based on the objective set, they will observe certain analytics that will help them see concrete results about your action, the most current and suggested because it comes from a technology giant is Google Analytics' (Arrieche, 2018).

3. METHODOLOGY

Exploratory research is carried out based on the search for sources on the main topic of the research in order to filter the truthful and appropriate information for the object of study.

In this sense, authors such as Argudo and Pons (2012) highlight that the most important part of the documentary review lies in the search for information and in the adequacy of this search to achieve the main objective of the analysis. This fact highlights the importance of the lexicon when filtering truthful information.

In the same vein Kolesas, De-Volder and Russo (2010) stress that the most important thing is, before starting the information search, to develop a strategy to optimise the chances of successful retrieval through logical operations or actions that solve certain problems.

In this context, the search for information has been simplified and made more difficult in equal parts: it has been simplified by the accessibility of specialised content as a result of the implementation of new technologies and the creation of databases, and it has been made more difficult by the fact that this democratisation of access complicates the choice of sources that comply with criteria where the quality of the information is paramount.

For this reason, an exhaustive review has been carried out. To this end, all sources that did not rigorously comply with the general criteria associated with scientific research were discarded, giving priority to publications in specialised journals, among others.

4. RESULTS

4.1. Analysis of the tools

In an increasingly digitalised environment, it is important for companies to have a presence in the online environment, as more and more users make purchases through company websites. It is therefore necessary for organisations to have the right tools in place to offer a positive shopping experience.

To do this, elements such as images, promotions, having a website that is intuitive for customers or controlling the time it takes for products to be shipped must be taken into account. Necessary manoeuvres when building an effective marketing strategy in the online environment to achieve the desired results.

These reasons make it necessary to analyse the use of tools that allow the senses to be awakened through the design of web pages.

The following tools can be identified as being directly applicable to sensory marketing on the Internet:

- Images and gifts; visual and kinaesthetic.
- Videos; auditory, visual and kinaesthetic.

These tools are the most widely used to arouse consumer interest in a brand within the digital medium. In this sense, it is relevant to remember, in the words of Alarcón (2020), the data provided by a study by Rockefeller University empirically demonstrated that human beings remember 35% of what they smell, 15% of what they taste, 5% of what they see, 2% of what they hear and 1% of what they touch.

This is why corporate identity must add value and be coherent and faithful to what it wants to represent, clearly perceiving the cultural characteristics that the company possesses, as well as bearing in mind the image that it wants to project to its environment: the identity of an organisation is materialised through a structure and presented as an image (Cucchiari, 2019).

Therefore, as González (2007) adds, all the pieces must respond to the same Identity signs that will reinforce the identification activity on the part of the audience.

Due to the impossibility of giving off smells or touching products through the screen, when wanting to establish a brand experience through the senses on the website, companies must take into account other ways of arousing emotions in their consumers. Therefore, having identified the aforementioned tools, it is clear how they can be applied to the online environment.

The visual and auditory senses are the ones that have the greatest impact on the online medium to attract the attention of users. Lázaro (2017) shows some revealing data on the relationship of human beings with visual content 'in relation to the function of colour in art, the effects of colour combinations on visual perception and their ability to provoke various emotions in the viewer that go beyond calm or excitement have been studied throughout history'.

Therefore, great importance should be given to this if the objective is to arouse sensations or create brand experience through the digital medium. Therefore, it is very important to choose the type of photographs to include in the medium, which follow the line of brand image and are in line with the strategy carried out. The human brain processes images 60,000 times faster than text (Alonso, 2015).

Finally, it should be borne in mind that the auditory sense is very important, as it is through language that communication takes place. Video is the most complete sensory element, as it makes use of these two senses: images and sound. Through video, corporate messages can be heard and visualised at the same time. Moreover, this tool

can be disseminated through multiple communication channels in order to reach a greater number of people.

4.2. Successful case of the application of sensory marketing in e-commerce: Freshly Cosmetics.

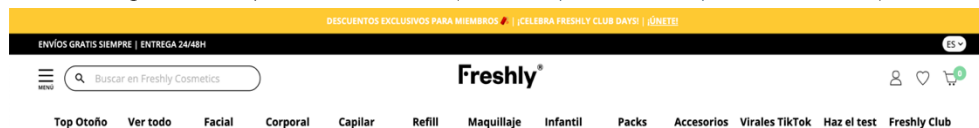
Since the success of an online business depends on knowing the customer's buying process, the company must offer the consumer what they expect at all times, offering a positive customer journey resulting in a great online shopping experience.

To achieve this, as has been shown, companies must include various sensory marketing techniques throughout their website. These tools must be adapted to the medium in order to be used in e-commerce to arouse emotions in the consumer. In order to exemplify the above in a successful case, the website of the best known and fastest growing cosmetics brand in recent years, Freshly Cosmetic, is studied.

Freshly Cosmetic is a brand dedicated to the manufacture and sale of beauty products for women's body, facial and hair care. In addition, its main seal is that it does not test on animals, all its products are 100% natural.

When accessing Freshly's website, one can observe the use of marketing techniques such as promotions and discounts through banners placed on the homepage of its website. There is also a banner which encourages users who enter the website to become members of the brand in order to enjoy numerous benefits (Figure 2).

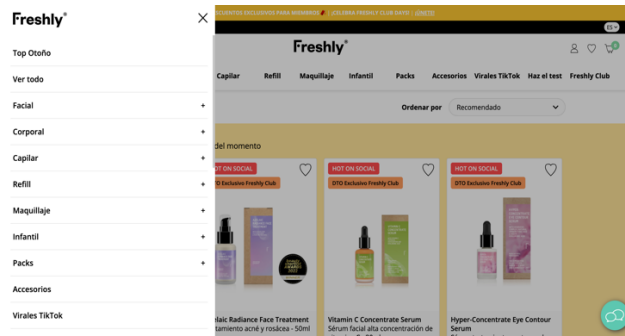
Figure 2. Freshly Cosmetics website (source: <https://www.freshlycosmetics.com/es/>)



The announcement of free deliveries at no extra cost is noted and indicates to users that in a few days they will be able to enjoy Freshly Days, where customers will be able to obtain offers on several of its products.

As for the structure of the page, it has been designed to be an easy-to-navigate website for users who enter it. To do this, they have divided their products into various sections. Freshly Cosmetic has a large portfolio of products and to make it easier to find them, it divides its product catalogue into different sections. As a result, the website has several sections such as facial, body, hair, among others. In this way, customers who need products for the body, by clicking on the body section, will be able to find all the products they need (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Freshly Cosmetics products (source: <https://www.freshlycosmetics.com/es/>)



As can be seen, the product catalogue is very visual, with numerous photos of each of its products, accompanied by the characteristic colours according to the product line to which they correspond.

Following the example, Figure 4 shows a moisturising gel for the face, the product is known as Pacific Ocean Moisturising Gel and appears in blue-green, a colour that is related and synchronised with the purity of the sea.

Figure 4. Pacific Ocean product of Freshly Cosmetics (source: <https://www.freshlycosmetics.com/es/>)



Providing more information about the design, below each of the products, the size of the packaging, the price and the rating (in stars) provided by customers who have tested the product are shown. In this way, the product is shown in the most visual and real way possible.

On the other hand, they have a section called Become a Freshly Member, where customers have the opportunity to enjoy various benefits such as exclusive discounts, access to the Freshly Stram platform where customers can find hundreds of videos with routines on the application of products, as well as offering a much more personalised service (Figure 5).

Figure 5. Freshly Cosmetics website (source: <https://www.freshlycosmetics.com/es/>)



In addition to visual tools, Freshly also works with other senses such as hearing. They frequently host videos on their website in the Freshly Stream section, where they explain the beauty routines that should be followed with each of the products, offering the best advice on the correct application to achieve fast and effective results. It also serves as a channel to present new product launches (Figure 6).

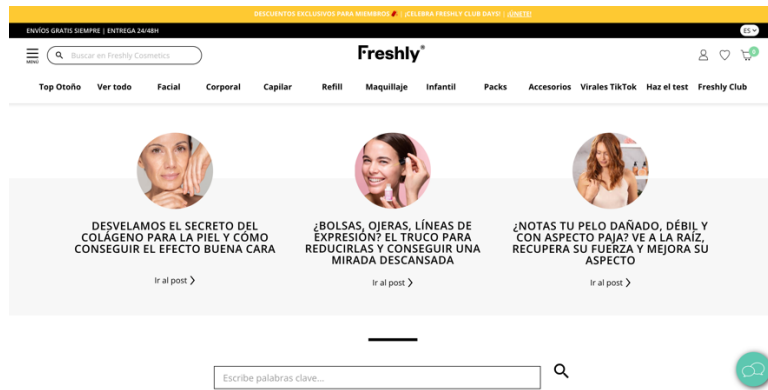
Figure 6. Viral products section on TikTok by Freshly Cosmetics (source: <https://www.freshlycosmetics.com/es/>)



Other related videos appear below the video, so that the customer does not miss any detail and is kept up to date with the latest news. It is a way to entertain, inform and persuade the customer during the purchasing process, showing other products that the user had not seen before or offering products that may be related to what they are looking for. In this way, the brand is able to increase product sales.

On Freshly's website, users also have access to a blog, Figure 7, where they can find information about all the products in the posts that are uploaded frequently. In addition, they are usually accompanied by images, gifs, photographs, links, which help to visually highlight the information we want to convey to the customer.

Figure 7. Freshly Cosmetics blogs (source: <https://www.freshlycosmetics.com/es/>)



At the bottom is a comments section, where customers are given a voice to express their shopping experience with the brand or product discussed in the post. Through the blog, customers can share their assessment with the rest of the users.

In addition, it can be seen that the Freshly brand is very attentive to the comments written by its subscribers, as they are active and respond quickly to users who participate in the blog in the form of a thank you.

It is very important for an online company to be constantly updating blog comments, news, to create a close relationship between the brand and the consumer and encourage users to be part of the group and expose their shopping experiences, as these tools are part of their mouth-to-mouth.

To conclude this chapter, it is important to know that sensory marketing can not only be adapted to the point of sale or physical shop, but there are also other specialised tools and elements to awaken the senses and emotions through e-commerce that are becoming increasingly important.

Unlike the physical point of sale where, in most cases, the senses (visual, auditory, touch, taste) are used in digital formats, greater use is made of the visual and auditory senses to attract consumers to a specific brand.

Therefore, it is important to take care of the image, the colours, the environment, in short, to create a pleasant atmosphere through the website with the use of sensory elements so that they are in accordance with the message that the company wishes to convey.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Given the great importance of the stimulation of the senses during the purchasing process and the evolution of digital media, the need to incorporate sensory marketing techniques through digital media has been detected. To this end, companies use different sensory tools through their websites to attract customers.

Following the research carried out, marketing is defined as a volatile concept that transforms in the same way as the digital environment does, and that continues to evolve at the same pace as consumers do.

The search for information is considered important when it comes to consuming a certain product or service, as consumers seek to obtain as much information as possible in order to fulfil their needs by acquiring that product or service. Companies must have communication strategies adapted through channels that have been evolving in recent times.

Emotions play a very important role in the buying process. In this context, the application of sensory marketing is essential in order to influence the senses and therefore the final purchase decision. Consumers are exposed to millions of advertising impacts on a daily basis and the main objective of companies is to arouse their emotions and create a higher degree of impact compared to the competition, i.e. to differentiate themselves from the rest. Therefore, it is necessary to take into account the evolution of the internet, as consumers are becoming increasingly digitalised, which is prompting companies to get involved in the study and implementation of new marketing techniques in digital media.

One of the key points of this research is the use of sensory marketing tools and their adaptation to the internet. In this sense, it is observed that companies are currently focusing on the transformation of their websites and the implementation of new formats. This explains the evolution in this field, moving from sales-oriented marketing to a marketing in which companies are fully aware of the importance of dealing with and interacting with the customer.

The challenge for companies in this context is to reduce the intangibility of sensory stimuli through these new formats. To do this, companies must have visibility in the online medium and work on the design of their website, which will be the perfect showcase for the sale of products and services of any company through the Internet.

Finally, we have analysed each of the sensory tools that current brands use on their websites, using as an example the successful case study of the cosmetics brand Freshly Cosmetics. It looks at each of the elements they use on their website to create a unique shopping experience. The analysis concludes with the predominant importance of the visual sense over the rest of the senses, which is why it is necessary for brands to work on web design, on elements such as colours, shapes and animations that should be applied to the content depending on the message they want to convey.

It can also be seen that, in addition to the visual sense, the auditory sense has become very important on websites. Many brands now use video as a sensory marketing tool on their websites to present new products or to explain their use.

In order to establish future lines of research, it is important to invest in and promote possible improvements in customer communication, since it has been shown that a high percentage of sales conversions arise from the stimuli generated through sensory

marketing. A good follow-up at this point can result in the customer perceiving exactly what you want to convey and thus following the expected lines of behaviour.

It would be interesting to evaluate the transformation of the brand into a solution for the consumer, since what is relevant is to encourage consumer acquisition and loyalty in order to have an exceptional communication flow and to achieve the expected optimum sales conversion until the added value provided is profitable.

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