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MULTISENSORIAL EXPERIENCE FOR IN-STORE AQUISITIONS

Case
Study

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Abstract

Today's consumers are looking for products, communication and marketing campaigns that delight the senses and generate intense emotions. As an overview, each sense can contribute to building a better, stronger and more sustainable brand, that's why more and more businesses shift their focus from traditional marketing to experiential marketing. The main question of this article is how important is multisensorial experiences for the in-store acquisition of mobile phones in Romania.

INTRODUCTION

It is already well known that in a society where purchasing products and seeking selling experiences became an important factor in every day living, brands started to wonder for some time how could they enhance positive attitudes to their costumers. Here comes in discussion the important role that emotions are playing in generating those attitudes, then, in the end, are visible through precise behaviour. Our senses can generate strong emotions in marketing if they are combined suitably.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Even before the very moment when the digital era took over each medium of communication, brands began to shift their focus from traditional marketing to experiential marketing. The first one had at its centre 4 important factors, namely the product's benefits and functionalities, the specific product category and the competition's definition, the consumers seen as a rational leader in decision making, the tools and methods rather analytical, quantitative and verbal.

This change is because today's consumers are looking for products, communication and marketing campaigns that delight the senses, penetrate their soul and stimulate their minds. They want products, means of communication and campaigns in which to find themselves and be able to integrate them into their own lives. They are seeking experiences. Experiences (Schmitt, 2011, p.24) are an organic result of the collision between various situational factors that stimulate the senses, heart or mind. They are responsible for connecting a company or brand to the lifestyle of its consumers and manage to place their actions and purchasing opportunities in a wider social context. In short, experiences offer sensory, emotional, cognitive, behavioural and relational values that replace the values underlying traditional marketing.

Experiential marketing. From experiences to emotions.

From an experiential marketing perspective (Schmitt, 2011, p.28), the consumer is considered to be equally rational and emotional as the consumer experiences are often directed towards the pursuit of fantasies, feelings or fun. Especially now, consumers want to be amused, stimulated, emotionally affected and challenged in creative processes. Therefore, the main pillars of experiential marketing reach 4 main areas: the senses, the emotions, the thinking, and the action.

That kind of marketing that focuses on the senses (Schmitt, 2011, p.61) aims to create sensory experiences through sight, hearing, tactile sense,

taste, and smell. It is used to emphasize differentiating factors related to the company or products, to motivate consumers and to add value. Attention to the sensory impact achieved through design is a key factor for the efficiency of this type of marketing. On the other hand, emotional marketing (Schmitt, 2011, p.64) uses consumers' feelings and emotions to create emotional experiences that range from mild positive affective states associated with a brand to strong emotions of joy or pride. Most of these states occur during the products consumption. This is why standard emotional marketing is inappropriate because it does not target existing feelings at the time of consumption. In the case of this type of marketing, it is important to understand the stimuli that manage to generate specific emotions as well as the consumer's willingness to engage in adopting the perspective proposed by the brand and its degree of empathy.

Cognitive marketing (Schmitt, 2011, p.66) appeals to the intellect to create cognitive experiences that solve different problems, managing to engage consumers creatively. Through this type of marketing, we want to stimulate the divergent and convergent thinking of consumers through surprise, intrigue or challenge. Although this type of marketing was associated with new technologies, it should not be limited to these industries.

Finally, action marketing aims to determine physical experiences, at the level of lifestyle and interactions. Action marketing (Schmitt, 2011, p.67) enriches the lives of customers by improving their physical experiences, showing them alternative ways of doing things, alternative lifestyles and interactions. Analytical, rational approaches to behavior change are just one of many options. Lifestyle changes are often more motivational, inspirational and spontaneous and are brought by models.

By combining these types of marketing, one obtains the relational marketing with the observation that it extends beyond the personal, private feelings of the individual, connecting it with an ideal self, with other people or with other cultures. Relational campaigns appeal to the individual's desire to improve their personal, to the need to be perceived positively by others. They relate the person to a wider social system, thus establishing strong brand relationships and brand communities.

What we should keep in mind is that experiences create emotions (Smith and Hanover, 2016, p.20) that cause people to respond and "feel" in a certain way. According to Jonathan Turner (Turner and Stets, 2012, pp. 6-9), an emotion technically appears as the brain connects. When we have a feeling, the neocortex is stimulated. Temporary lobes process the recognition of sound, music, face, and objects. Occipital lobes process what is seen. And the parietal lobes manage spatial reasoning (Sousa, 2011, pp. 37-50).

Emotion (Smith and Hanover, 2012, p.154) is a complex set of interactions between subjective and objective factors, mediated by neural systems, which can (a) give rise to affective experiences such as feelings of arousal, pleasure/dissatisfaction; (b) it generates cognitive processes, such as emotionally relevant perceptual effects, appraisals, labeling processes; (c) activate physiological adjustments spread to the awakening conditions; and (d) lead to behavior that is often, but not always, expressive, goal-oriented and adaptable.

Sensorial Marketing

One of the main tools of experiential marketing is emotional branding (Dewanti, Ismail, Wibisono, 2010, p.242). According to Marc Gobe (2001, p. 167), emotional branding is used to create personal communication with the consumer. They emphasize the importance of 4 aspects that confer the structure of emotional branding, namely the relationship, the sensory experiences, the imagination, and the vision. First, the brand should focus its attention on the relationship established with the consumer and displaying his appreciation. Then, the consumer should be welcomed at every step with sensory experiences to generate a greater degree of memorability and loyalty. And to reach the heart of the consumer, the brand should prove a high imagination in creating the design of the products or campaigns, and only by calling the vision will its effect be long term. Ultimately, they all have two main goals - brand trust and brand loyalty. According to Ellena Delgado Bailester (2003, pp.35-56), brand trust is a sense of consumer safety resulting from the interaction with a brand, based on the perception that the brand can be responsible for the safety and needs of consumers. On the other hand, brand loyalty according to Keegan, et al (1995, p.6) is the tendency of the consumer to have a constantly positive attitude towards a certain brand and to buy it repeatedly over time.

The brand building process is based on perception - nothing more, nothing less. Creating the perfect perception requires a perfect sensory call. The purpose is to help revitalize the brand, evaluating and optimizing each dimension that contributes to brand perception. The sensory brand aims to stimulate the relationship with the brand, optimizing the impulses that determine a buying behavior, arousing the interest and allowing the emotional response to dominate rational thinking. A brand stimulus not only motivates impulsive behavior but directly connects emotions to the brand. Brand stimuli create long-term loyalty. Just as a hologram allows us to see the same figure from different angles, so does sensory branding to see different dimensions of a single brand. What should be kept in mind is that sensory consistency (Lindstrom, 2005, p.115) is what creates loyalty. It builds trust and generates repeat purchases because people trust

familiar signals. Consistency generates a history, while history forms tradition and traditions lead to rituals. Therefore, sensory marketing consists of generating attitudes adjacent to a brand, but also buying behaviors by appealing to the 5 senses. Although it is desired that the 5 senses be appealed simultaneously, the brands hardly succeed. Instead, they could manage to combine at least 3 senses, of course in different measures, depending on the industry in which they operate and the type of product promoted.

Sight (Lindstrom, 2005, p.18) is the most seductive sense of all and the most powerful of all. Often it overrides the other senses and has the power to convince us against any logic. Understandably, it is the sense that brand builders and marketers have traditionally focused on. For example, tablets and capsules have all shapes, sizes and colors, each designed to differentiate the product, giving a certain emotional "feeling" to the drug, to instill customer loyalty. The way a tablet looks is an important aspect of maintaining loyalty. However, visual power has dissipated into a world that bombards consumers with all sorts of visual images. There is so much visual disorder that people can move through it. Due to this overexposure, the focus on visual messages has diminished.

The perfumes evoke images, sensations, memories, and associations. The **smell** affects us substantially more than we are aware of. It played a vital role in our survival, warning us of distant danger, such as fire. Pieter Aarts and J. Stephan Jellinek (2003, pp.16-18) are psychologists who have studied how people's feelings, judgments, and behavior are unconsciously shaped by smell. They refer to this as the Implicit Memory of Smell. Their findings support the premise that perfume is a vital factor when someone buys, collects or uses a product. Therefore, we can conclude that odor plays a very important role in consumer acceptance of a brand. The aroma is becoming more and more effective.

While the smell is connected to memory, the **sound** is connected to mood (Lindstrom, 2005, pp.21-24). The sound generates a mood. It creates feelings and emotions. Music (Lindstrom, 2005, p.74) creates new memories, evokes the past and can instantly transport you to another place. Sound and vision are the two senses that are already integrated in every aspect of marketing and merchandising. Traditionally, the sound has focused on the call to our hearing, to the detriment of our listening capabilities. The notion that sound can influence a purchase decision was virtually ignored. But almost half of the consumers who recognize Nokia's tone associate it with very positive feelings (Lindstrom, 2005, p.79). It looks like a Nokia phone doesn't just ring. More than 20% of those who hear the name Nokia say that it makes them feel positive, generally "satisfied", "excited", "pleased", "happy" or "controlled". This is a branding tool that directly

touches your emotions. The sound of a brand adds to the perception of the products' quality and function. If it is eliminated, the perception is diluted. Therefore, it is extremely important to evaluate the role of the sound generated by the product, as consumers are becoming more aware - and critical - about this phenomenon.

On the other hand, we have the tactile sense (Lindstrom, 2005, p.26). The word touch encompasses a world of meaning. We try to "stay in touch" with friends and "lose touch" with some. People are partial to "personal touch" as an expression of a personal language. The tactile sense warns us about our general well-being.

How a brand feels has a lot to do with what kind of quality we attribute to the product (Lindstrom, 2005, p.87). The way a car feels when we sit inside it and pass our hands over the steering and controls is important for 49% of consumers who choose a car. Less than 4% of the people surveyed suggested that the tactile sensation of a car is irrelevant. On the other hand, the results showed that 35% of the consumers surveyed said that the feeling of their phone is more important than the appearance. An astonishing 46% of consumers said that the weight of the phone was more important than its appearance in the purchase decision.

As an overview, each sense can contribute to building a better, stronger and more sustainable brand. This cannot be done in isolation. The objective is to ensure a positive synergy between several consumer contact points, ensuring a unique identity that will be impossible to copy by competitors.

Marketing has always been about establishing emotional connections between the brand and the consumer. As in any relationship, emotions are based on information gathered from our senses. And the purpose of sensory marketing is to ensure systematic integration of the senses into your communication, product, and services. This will stimulate the imagination, improve the product and connect brand consumers.

The ultimate goal of sensory marketing is to create a strong, positive and loyal connection between the brand and the consumer so that the customer repeatedly calls the brand and only observes competing products. The sensory brand (Lindstrom, 2005, p.107) offers the potential to create the most compulsory form of engagement between the brand and the consumer seen so far. The goal is a relationship characterized by loyalty, built over a long period. To establish this connection, the sensory appeal must have two essential ingredients: it must be unique to the brand and must become commonplace. Not all sensory marketing initiatives will necessarily generate such high levels of loyalty, but loyalty will result if the brand maintains a distinct sensory appeal that is not imitated by competing brands. Sensory marketing will create an

emotional connection between product extensions using sensory touchpoints that are constantly repeated in each new product category.

Sensorial marketing in the mobile phones industry

Every aspect of a phone, from the tactile qualities, the design and the display, the branding sounds generated when using it, to the very smell of the product, will be evaluated, improved in the next few years. As further integration into personal computers and phones takes place, so the touchpoints will move to the platforms that link the products together and take advantage of the connection of brand touchpoints. Also, because the technology presents innovations, they can be integrated immediately into the sensory world of the brand. An example is Immersion, whose technology is designed to allow you to "touch" someone over the phone. According to the BBC online, "The company has talked to mobile phone manufacturers to integrate into future phones."

METHODOLOGY

The study is based on a direct, quantitative marketing research that follows the multisensory experience in the in-store purchases (consumer motivations of certain products directly from shops). The method of gathering information is based on a questionnaire consisting of 25 questions, designed on the Google Forms online, based on the replies of 50 respondents interviewed from October to November 2019. The sample consists of both female and male, urban and rural environments, internet users in Romania.

DATA ANALYSIS

A first objective in conducting this research is to identify the purchasing behavior of mobile phones in stores by users, objective pursued by questions Q1-Q7. The majority of respondents interviewed, in a percentage of 74%, purchase the product directly from the stores, while 22% prefer buying online. Also, regarding the main sources of information used in the decision for purchasing a mobile phone, 78% of respondents, are informed directly from specialized stores and only 12% from the Internet, and 10% are informed by friends/relatives. We can, therefore, say that specialized stores offer greater confidence to consumers when it comes to information and acquisition of mobile phones (Figure no 1).

When people go to stores, 66% have an accurate reason, they know exactly where to find what they're interested in.

From the analysis carried out, it can be observed that the three main reasons for buying a mobile phone directly from the store. 92% choose to buy from the stores for the warranty, for 74% it is important to be able to touch the products, 54% are interested in testing the products, while the promotions are being considered important by only 16% (Figure no 2).

The second objective pursued is the analysis of consumer perception on the emotion transmitted when they are in a specialized mobile phone store, resulting from the Q8-Q20 questions. Regarding the multisensory experience, their distribution in the sample is as follows: 44% feel visual, 32% feel tactile and 24% auditory sense. We could say that selling in stores is the most widespread. However, the brand's power proves to be the most influential, being chosen by respondents in a percentage of 62%, while unknown brands are chosen by only 18%.

Another investigated objective concerns the analysis of the importance of criteria for the sale of a product in the store, with the help of the Q11 question. In almost equal proportions, mobile phone users have important relevance to both brand awareness, personal needs, product attractiveness, the information offered and call-to-action.

Although some of the respondents believe that purchasing in stores is distracting them and slow down the decision-making process, over 50% of those questioned appreciate the fact that it is convincing and provides relevant information, as they can feel, test and compare the products they are interested in. Thus, it is widely acknowledged the importance of selling them in stores (Figure no 3).

As part of the brand, personalized products have a major influence on respondents, with 70% of them agreeing that they are more receptive to this type of product.

Regarding the preference for a particular brand, the overall trend is the appreciation of reputable brands, with very few respondents considering a certain unfavorable or very unfavorable category. Selling in stores (44%) is the most appreciated form, which is followed by online selling (42%). At the opposite pole, the less appreciated sale form is the sale of secondhand products (16%) (Figure no 4).

When asked how much the specialized shops influences the purchase act, the opinions were quite divided, so the highest share of the respondents (40%) was influenced by 10 to 30% of their sense of touch, followed closely by those who are influenced by a proportion of less than 10% (28% of them) and those who are influenced by 31-60% (26% of them). Large brands have a major influence on only 6% of the respondents (greater than 61%) (Figure no 5).

In general, there is a positive attitude to multisensory experience, with more than half of respondents being satisfied with the actions undertaken by brands for mobile phone sales, which means that the purchase experience is satisfactory. Therefore, the answer to the question Q17 is consistent with it.

More than 56% of respondents consider the multisensory experience necessary.

In terms of online sales, 44% of respondents consider that there is no need for a sensorial experience when purchasing a mobile phone, the main reasons being the smaller price and the fact that they would not have to go to a store (Figure no 6).

Although we are all disturbed to a greater or lesser extent of certain aspects when shopping, most responses from the people surveyed about the inconvenience when buying online was negative. Consequently, an extremely high percentage (86%) said they were willing to pay for a product purchased from the store to avoid this problem.

By making a parallel between online selling and in-store selling in terms of efficiency, 78% of respondents appreciate the positive effects of in-store buying, at the expense of the second category, because consumers can feel the product, can test it and ask for more information about it from people specialized in selling mobile phones.

CONCLUSIONS

Following this study, it has been shown that among consumers, the efficiency remains high when they want to buy a product directly from the stores. An interesting aspect is that the sellers should focus on, is that most of the respondents want to receive emotional experiences when buying a product. In this context, sellers have begun to arouse interest through the devices they have for sale.

At the same time, it is apparent from the study that most of the respondents are acquiring mobile phones for a particular purpose, and the main reason is to find out more information that only the Internet could provide on time. Also, the most effective form of advertising remains the publicity of information, to which respondents have shown the most receptive. Thus, we could say that consumers aim, firstly, to obtain relevant information, information that would not be accessible in affirms Environment or which would entail time or additional cost.

On another level, the multisensorial experience, no matter its form, should be personalized, to have the consumers' attention. According to this study, personalized sales is an important factor for users. 70% of them claim that they are more receptive when they encounter any form of personalized sensorial experience

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Figures

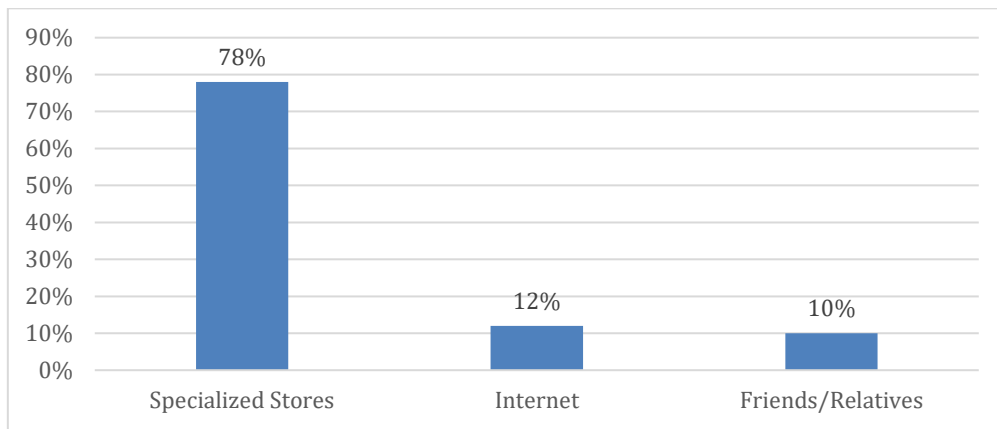


Figure no 1
The main channels for providing the information used in the decision to buy a mobile phone

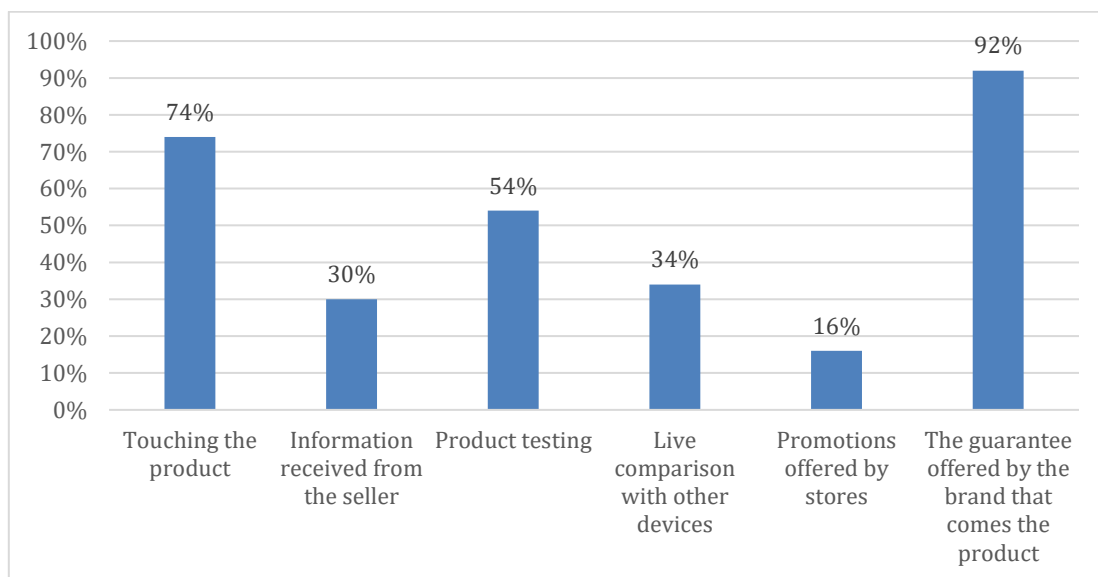


Figure no 2
Reasons to buy a mobile phone directly from the store

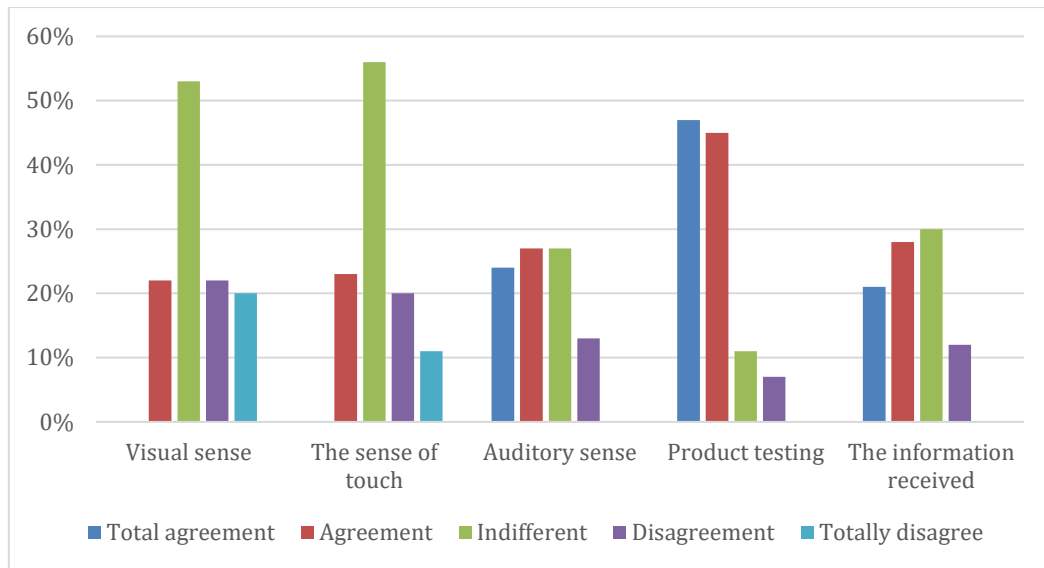


Figure no 3
Consumer appreciation of shopping in stores

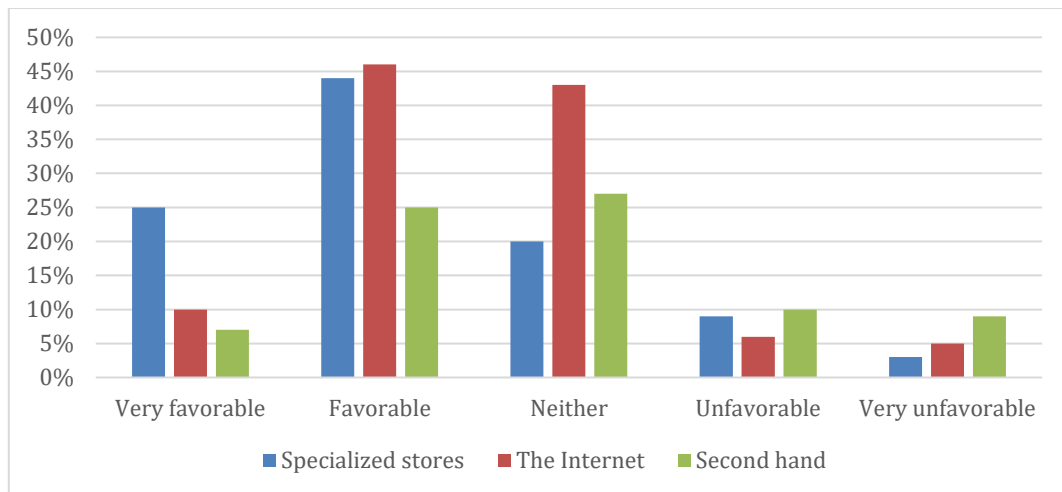


Figure no 4
Consumer preference for the purchase of a mobile phone

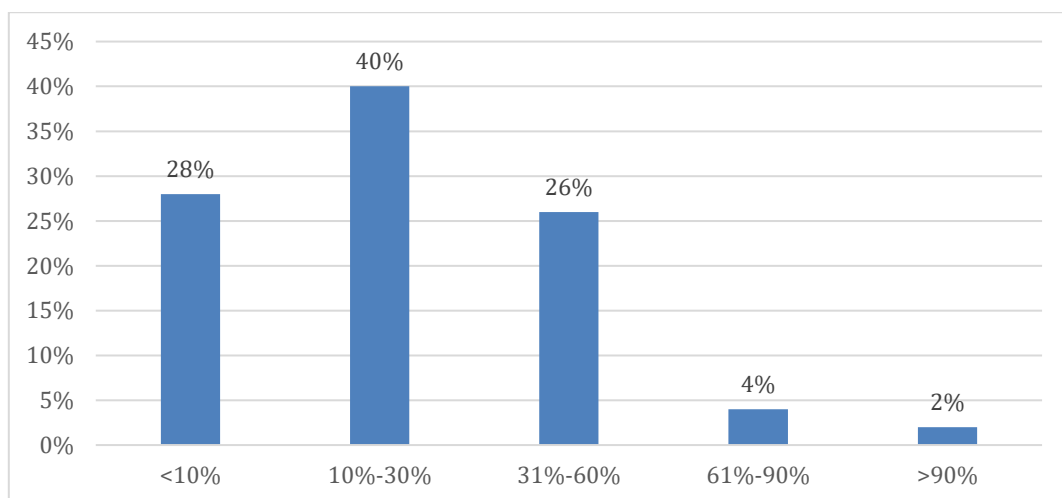


Figure no 5
Influence of in-store sales on buying behavior

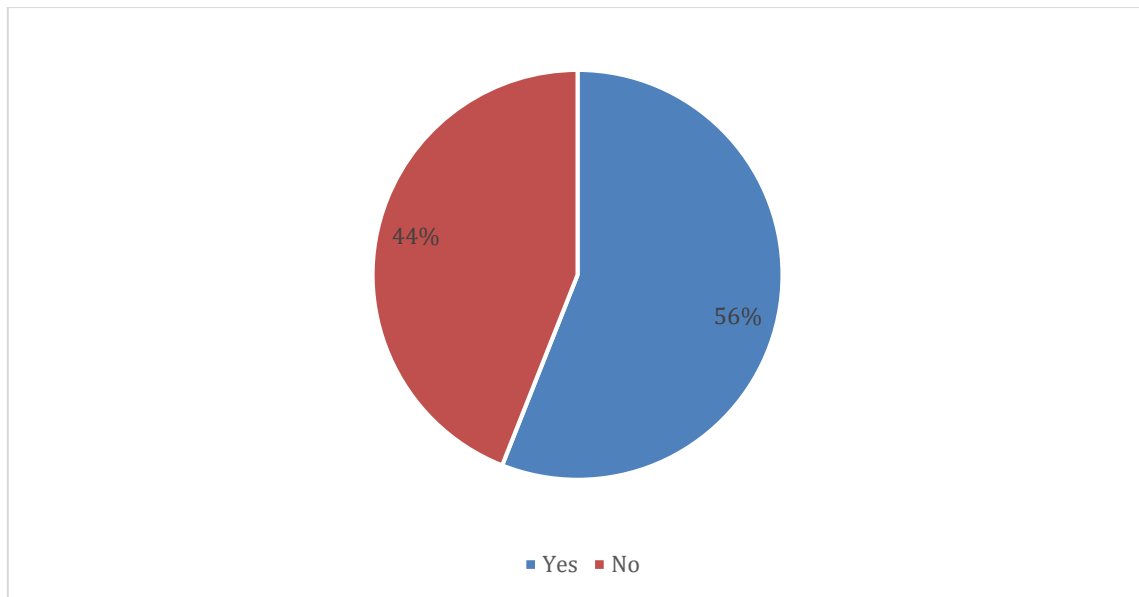


Figure no 6
Multisensory experience is important when buying a mobile phone