

Perception Of Consumer Behavior And Its Impact On The Profitability And Financial Sustainability Of Commercial Establishments In The Special Tourist And Cultural District Of Riohacha

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this article is to analyze the perception of consumer behavior and its impact on the profitability and financial sustainability of commercial establishments in the Special Tourist and Cultural District of Riohacha, taking into account the sensory dynamics of perception and subliminal perception, based on theories of Schiffman and Lazar (2010), Solomon (2008), Valbuena (2017). The study is based on the importance of the perception of consumer behaviour in commercial establishments and its relationship with financial profitability. The methodology used was quantitative, with a descriptive and cross-sectional design, using surveys applied to the managers and customers of the commercial establishments. The results show that consumers highly value the quality of service and customer service, which significantly influences their purchasing decisions. In addition, sensory and subliminal perception plays a crucial role in customer satisfaction and loyalty, highlighting the importance of a marketing strategy that considers these perceptual aspects to achieve profitability and financial sustainability of commercial establishments

Keywords: consumer behavior, consumer perception, financial sustainability, commercial dynamics, Riohacha

INTRODUCTION

Today, consumer behavior has become a vitally important issue for companies looking to stay competitive in a globalized and ever-changing marketplace. Sustainability and the ability to adapt to new ways of doing business are essential to achieving business success. Over the years, it becomes a challenge for organizations to be able to achieve the satisfaction of customer needs in a higher percentage than that of their competitors, taking into account that the main objective of all the organization's activity is focused on achieving it, it is necessary that they understand consumer behavior, since it is the best way for them to achieve their own growth and profitability objectives.

From the economic and financial perspective, the understanding of consumer behavior emerges as a strategic element for the profitability and sustainability of commercial entities. Consumer-generated conceptions of products and services have a direct influence on key

variables such as sales volume, repeat acquisition, and loyalty, which determine the stability of revenue and the long-term financial sustainability of organizations.

Thus, acquisition and loyalty, which determine the stability of income and the financial sustainability of organizations in the long term, corporations that manage to align their business strategies with consumer expectations and perceptions enhance their ability to adapt to the market and optimize their financial performance.

Therefore, consumer behavior encompasses the set of mental, emotional activities and processes that people carry out when they select, buy, evaluate and use products. By studying consumer behavior, marketers can understand and predict the behavior of customers, current or prospective, who make up the market. Through this research, not only do we know the products that consumers buy, but also the reasons for the purchase, the places and times in which they are purchased or the way in which the shopping activities are carried out. (Molla et al., 2006)

In this sense, it is important to understand how consumer behavior influences the purchase process. At an international and national level, companies are betting on understanding this issue more, making use of marketing as a tool with the purpose of studying, analyzing and creating strategies to contribute to market positioning, leading to maximizing the customer portfolio and therefore increasing the company's assets. Consumer behavior in Colombia is influenced by a mix of cultural, economic, and technological elements. Companies that manage to understand and adapt to these dynamics can better position themselves to meet the needs and expectations of Colombian consumers.

This article is based on the need to analyze the perception of consumer behavior and its impact on the profitability and financial sustainability of commercial establishments in the Special Tourist and Cultural District of Riohacha, documenting some theoretical foundations on consumer perception, the sensory dynamics of perception and •Subliminal perception. In order to study in depth the behavior of the consumer in a substantial way and thus achieve an impact that improves the level of performance and competitiveness in the commercial sector

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

Consumer behavior

The most recognized and successful organizations in the world have been able to establish the level of satisfaction in their customers, creating strategies that allow them to be a little closer to them in order to achieve their objectives, these have generated a focus on their consumers to determine their needs and thus be able to design, produce and market products and services of the highest quality, that goes according to the needs of each of its consumers. For Kotler and Armstrong (2018), they reinforce the idea that differences in needs, desires, and consumption patterns are deeply linked to demographic characteristics.

The authors Molla, Berenguer, Gómez and Quintanilla (2006), explain how important consumers are for a company, help to understand why organizations should be concerned and study a little more this issue that is of great importance when offering a product to the market, also the roles and roles that a consumer has in the market, the types of consumers and some important aspects that every company should take into account before offering a new product to the market. What they seek is to make entrepreneurs aware of how vital it is to study the behavior of the people who are going to consume their product or service, it must be known what type of consumers the product is aimed at in order to establish how it is going to be offered.

Following on from the above, Descals (2006) explains that consumers determine sales and the success of companies with their purchasing decisions. Hence, for them it is essential to know and analyze what are the motives, actions and circumstances that lead individuals to acquire some products and not others. And the fact is that the viability of the companies will depend on knowledge of all this, at least to a large extent.

In addition to the above, Barrera, Duque, and Merchan (2022) stated in their research that consumer neuroscience examines the behavior of the brain in the face of the different stimuli produced by brands in order to determine what are the main factors that lead a person to consume a product, to understand the human brain and, with this, determine what are the factors that lead him to decision-making.

For Barbeo, Ortega, and Villavicencio (2021), the consumer undergoes constant changes, due to environmental factors that influence their purchasing behavior, therefore, the use of digital tools in many cities during the COVID-19 pandemic, consumer purchasing behavior changed through these processes was based on fear of contagion and the agility of purchase in applications. Hence the importance of studying consumer perception from all angles.

Consumer Perception

According to Schiffman and Lazar (2010) they define that people act and react based on their perceptions, and not on objective reality, for individuals, reality is a totally particular phenomenon that is based on their needs, desires, values and experiences. Perception is defined as the process by which an individual selects, organizes, and interprets stimuli to form a meaningful and coherent picture of the world.

It is stated that this is "how we see the world around us". Two individuals could be exposed to the same stimuli and apparently under the same conditions; however, the way in which each of them recognizes, selects, organizes, and interprets them is a very unique process, and is based on the specific needs, values, and expectations of each human being. Cantillo, Peraza, & Gómez (2022) It is the process of receiving, organizing, and assigning meaning to the information or stimuli detected by our five senses. This is how we interpret or understand the world around us.

In this order of ideas, Solomon (2008) states that it is the study of the processes that intervene when a person or group selects, buys, uses or discards products, services, ideas or experiences to satisfy needs and desires. Consumers take many forms, ranging from desire to a purchase decision. Thus, the items we consume can include anything, starting from the needs and desires that we want to satisfy ranging from hunger and thirst, to love, status or even spiritual fulfillment. Valbuena (2017) In his report on consumer behavior, he states that "perception is a process of the individual in which he recognizes, selects, organizes, and interprets stimuli to integrate a meaningful and coherent vision of the world, based on his needs, values, and expectations."

The authors agree that perception involves the selection, organization and interpretation of stimuli. Schiffman and Lazar describe this process in detail, and Valbuena, through Canon, reaffirms this idea by pointing out that perception integrates a meaningful and coherent view of the world. Solomon does not explicitly explain it in terms of selection and organization, but he does explain it in the context of how consumers process information to satisfy needs and wants.

Among the authors mentioned, the theory presented by Solomon (2008) goes further by explaining certain things that the other two authors do not explain. In particular, Solomon not only focuses on the perception process, but also on consumer behavior in a more holistic and practical way. Their approach encompasses the entire process from selection and purchase to product use and disposal, providing a more complete perspective on how perceptions influence each stage of the consumption cycle. The author also offers a vision

that encompasses not only perception, but also how it influences the behavior of purchase and use of products. This includes an analysis of purchasing decisions and their factors, providing a broader and more applicable framework for understanding the consumer.

Sensory Dynamics of Perception

From the conceptualization of Schiffman and Lazar (2010), individuals could be exposed to the same stimuli and apparently under the same conditions; however, the way in which each of them recognizes, selects, organizes, and interprets them is a very unique process, and is based on the specific needs, values, and expectations of each human being.

In this sense, sensation is the immediate and direct response of the sensory organs to a stimulus. Which is any unit of input for any of the senses. Examples of stimuli (i.e., sensory inputs) include products, packaging, brand names, advertisements, and commercials. Sensory receptors are the human organs, eyes, ears, nose, mouth, and skin, which receive sensory inputs.

Its sensory functions consist of observing, listening, smelling, tasting, and touching. All of these functions are activated, either individually or in combination, for the evaluation, acquisition and use of most consumer products. Human sensibility refers to the experience of sensation. Sensitivity to a stimulus varies according to the quality of an individual's sensory receptors

According to Solomon (2008), external stimuli or sensory information are received through various channels. We can see a billboard, listen to the music of an advertisement, feel the softness of a cashmere sweater, try a new flavor of ice cream, or smell a leather jacket. The information that our five senses detect are the raw data that initiate the perceptual process. For example, sensory data emanating from the outside environment (e.g., hearing a tune on the radio) can generate internal sensory experiences when the song triggers a young man's memory of his first dance and awakens the memory of the scent of his girlfriend's perfume or the sensation of her hair on his cheek.

A product's unique sensory quality plays an important role in making it stand out from the competition, especially if the brand creates a unique association with feel. These responses are an important part of hedonistic consumption, which are the multisensory, fantastical and emotional aspects of consumers' interactions with products.

The authors agree that perception is a highly individualized process, influenced by the needs, values, and expectations of each person. Schiffman and Lazar (2010) highlight that, although individuals may be exposed to the same stimuli, the way in which they recognize, select, organize, and interpret them is unique to each one, based on their personal characteristics. Solomon (2008) complements this view by emphasizing how external stimuli, received through the five senses, become raw data that initiate the perceptual process, generating internal sensory experiences and emotional associations. Both approaches underscore the importance of sensory quality and how it can influence the consumer experience, highlighting the multisensory and emotional aspects of interacting with products.

Among the authors, Solomon's theory (2008) goes further and offers a more complete explanation of the sensory dynamics of perception. Solomon not only addresses how external stimuli become internal sensory experiences, but also explores how these experiences can generate emotional associations and meaningful memories, which is crucial for hedonistic consumption. In addition, Solomon highlights how a product's unique sensory quality can make it stand out from the competition, creating specific and emotionally charged partnerships with consumers. This comprehensive perspective provides a solid foundation for understanding how sensory experiences influence consumer behavior.

- **Subliminal Perception**

For Solomon (2020), subliminal perception occurs when the stimulus is below the consumer's level of consciousness. For the author, it is a topic that has captivated the public for more than 40 years, despite the fact that there is practically no evidence that this process has any effect on consumer behavior. A survey of U.S. consumers found that nearly two-thirds believe in the existence of subliminal advertising, and more than half are convinced that this technique could lead them to buy things they don't really want.

In this sense, most of the examples of subliminal perception that have been "discovered" are not subliminal at all; on the contrary, these images are quite visible. Remember: if you see or hear it, it is not subliminal, since the stimulus exceeds the level of consciousness. However, the continuing controversy over subliminal persuasion is important in shaping the public's beliefs about the ability of advertisers and marketers to manipulate consumers against their will.

From the perspective of Schiffman and Lazar (2010), individuals can also be stimulated below their respective levels of conscious perception, that is, they are able to perceive stimuli without being aware that they are receiving them. Stimuli that are too weak or too brief to be consciously seen or heard may, however, be strong enough to be perceived by one or more receptor cells.

This process is known as subliminal perception, because the stimulus is below the threshold or "limen" of conscious perception, although it is evident that it is not below the absolute threshold of the participating receptor organs. (The perception of stimuli that are above the level of conscious perception is called, in technical language, supraliminal perception, although when referring to it it is usually referred to simply as perception.)

We must emphasize that the perception of an individual is subjective, selective and temporary, which makes it a factor of great importance and analysis, the way in which a consumer perceives a product is decisive at the time of purchase since you can have an idea or generate a favorable image about the product you want. which is a good sign since it can lead to a successful purchase and customer loyalty. In addition to the above, Kotler & Armstrong (2021) point out that achieving full consumer satisfaction is the basic objective of any organization, and to achieve it you must know very well what the most appropriate marketing strategy would be.

The authors agree that subliminal perception occurs when stimuli are below the consumer's level of consciousness. Solomon (2008) and Schiffman and Lazar (2010) explain that, although these stimuli are not consciously perceived, they can be detected by the receptor cells. Both authors underscore the controversy and fascination surrounding subliminal perception, despite the lack of concrete evidence on its influence on consumer behavior. They agree that subliminal stimuli, by definition, are below the threshold of conscious perception and highlight the subjectivity and selectivity of individual perception.

Among the authors, Solomon's theory (2008) goes further and offers a more complete and critical explanation of subliminal perception. Solomon not only describes the phenomenon and how it works, but also addresses the public perception and cultural impact of subliminal perception. He highlights how belief in subliminal advertising can shape the public's perceptions of advertisers' ability to manipulate behavior, regardless of scientific evidence.

In addition, Solomon criticizes the common confusion between the subliminal and the visible, which adds an important critical dimension to the analysis of subliminal perception. This comprehensive and critical perspective provides a deeper understanding of subliminal perception and its impact on consumer psychology.

Consumer Behavior, Perceived Value, and Financial Performance

Contemporary approaches to consumer behavior highlight the close relationship between customer perception and the financial performance of firms. From the point of view of customer experience management, it is proposed that consumers evaluate their interaction with organizations in a comprehensive way, considering sensory, emotional, and cognitive experiences throughout the purchase process (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016).

Proper management of these experiences strengthens loyalty and increases customer lifetime value, which translates into higher levels of profitability and financial sustainability for commercial establishments (Homburg et al., 2017). In contrast, a negative consumer perception increases customer acquisition costs and reduces revenue stability, affecting the economic performance of the business.

In a complementary way, the theory of the perceived value of the customer maintains that purchasing decisions are based on the subjective evaluation made by the consumer between the benefits received and the costs assumed, both monetary and non-monetary (Sánchez-Fernández & Iniesta-Bonillo, 2017). When the perceived value is low, the probability of repurchase decreases, generating negative impacts on the profitability and financial sustainability of organizations.

In this context, the analysis of consumer behavior is not only a marketing tool, but also a key element for financial management, allowing companies to design strategies aimed at creating sustainable economic value.

METHODOLOGY

This research is descriptive, in which characteristic facts of the consumer behavior variable are compiled and interpreted, extracted from the opinion of the respondents in the study scenario. According to Gómez (2016), descriptive research consists of describing situations, events, and facts; they seek to specify the properties, characteristics and important aspects of the phenomenon that is being analyzed. According to Arias (2016), descriptive research consists of the characterization of a fact, phenomenon, individual, or group, in order to know its structure or behavior.

The population, according to Méndez (2013) is the total set of elements of study. The approach of Hernández, et al (2014) the population is the set of all cases that agree with certain specifications, according to Hernández, and Martínez (2018). It must start from the characteristics of content, place and time. For this research, information was collected from customers who frequent the 31 businesses registered in the chamber of commerce of the special, tourist and cultural district of Riohacha.

The instrument was applied in normal season based on the measurement of the perception of behavior in the purchase decision, to a sample population of 364 individuals based on a Likert scale with three questions for each indicator: sensory dynamics of perception and subliminal perception. The absolute frequency, relative frequency, average by absolute and relative frequency were determined and, The standard deviation. In this sense, Gómez (2016) admits that the quantitative approach uses data collection and analysis to answer research questions and test previously established hypotheses, and relies on numerical measurement, counting, and the use of statistics to try to accurately establish patterns in a population. In this sense, (Bernal, 2017) quantitative studies are based on the calculation of the particularities of social events, taking into account the proceeding from an accurate conceptual description of the problem studying, through postulations that pronounce a direct relationship between the variables investigated in a deductive way; In this sense, it seeks to systematize and order the results

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

Table 1 Consumer Perception (customers)

Indicator	Answer Alternatives	Totally Agreement		I agree		No agreement; Neither agree nor disagree		Disagree		Total disagreement		Average		DIM	
		Fa	Fr	Fa	Fr	Fa	Fr	Fa	Fr	Fa	Fr	Item	In. D		
Sensory Dynamics of Perception	1	0	0,00	3	0,8	44	12,9	12	37,9	164	48,23	1,6	2,3	2,49	
	2	4	1,18	5	10,29	13	38,20	97	28,5	74	21,76	2,4			1
	3	15	4,41	3	27,35	10	32,09	97	28,5	26	7,64	2,9			
Subliminal Perception	4	19	5,59	5	25,0	98	28,82	12	37,1	12	3,52	2,9	2,6		
	5	12	3,53	2	7,35	10	30,02	13	40,6	63	18,59	2,3	7		
Average FA		10		48,2		95,25		117,4		67,8					
Deviation		7,84		39,10		31,89		19,14		59,53					
Average FR		2,94		14,18		28,41		34,53		19,94					

Source: Own elaboration (2024)

When looking at table 1, with reference to the consumer perception dimension, for the sensory dynamic indicator of perception, in item 1, 48.23% of the customers surveyed responded that they totally disagree, in terms of the purchases they make based on a need, 12.94% neither agree nor disagree. 37.9% disagree and 0.88% agree. For item 2, with respect to the purchases made to cover a wish, 1.18% strongly agree, 10.29% agree, 38.24% neither agree nor disagree, 28.5% disagree and finally with 21.76% totally disagree.

Next, for item 3, which refers to the question, if at the time of making purchases they do so because they want to be at the forefront, the customers in the study answered as follows: with 4.41% in total agreement, 27.35% in agreement, 32.06 neither in agreement nor in disagreement, 28.5% in disagreement and with 7.64% in total disagreement.

Regarding the subliminal perception indicator, for item 4, the stimuli received from advertising affect the time of making the purchase, the subjects of the study stated that 5.59% strongly agree, 25% disagree, 28.82% neither agree nor disagree, 37.1% disagree and 3.5% strongly disagree. For item 5, 3.53% strongly agree, 7.35% agree, 30% neither agree nor disagree, 40.6% disagree and 18.59% strongly disagree, who at the time of making their purchase are guided by what they evaluate their senses.

Evidently, it is observed for this dimension, which yielded an average of 2.49, which, according to the average interpretation scale, is located in a low presence. In relation to the dispersion means, the standard deviation, the totally disagree alternative had a high value of 59.53, followed by 39.10 for the agree alternative, 31.89 for the neither agree nor disagree option, 19.14 disagree and 7.84 totally agree.

Regarding the closure of this dimension, it can be observed that the indicator that obtained a higher average was subliminal perception, with a value of 2.64, referring to the fact that clients are unconscious phenomena that a subject has towards external stimuli. This coincides with the position of Solomon (2008) who points out the process of perception and consumer behavior in a broader and more practical way. Their approach encompasses the entire process, from selection and purchase to product use and disposal, providing a more comprehensive perspective on how perceptions influence each stage of the consumption cycle.

Table 2 Consumer Perception (Administrators)

Indicator	Answer Alternatives	Total agreement		I agree		No agreement; Nor disagree		Disagree		Total disagreement		Average		DIM
		Fa	Fr	Fa	Fr	Fa	Fr	Fa	Fr	Fa	Fr	Item	In. D	
Sensory Dynamics of Perception	1	0	0,00	0	0,0	0	0,00	1	0,2	30	8,82	1,03	1,29	1,90
	2	0	0,00	1	0,2	5	1,47	3	0,8	22	6,47	1,52		
	3	0	0,00	0	0,0	2	0,59	6	1,7	23	6,76	1,32		
Subliminal Perception	4	11	3,24	2	0,6	6	1,76	1	0,2	11	3,23	3,03	2,50	
	5	4	1,18	1	0,2	4	1,18	3	0,8	19	5,58	1,97		
Average FA		3,00		0,80		3,25		2,8		21,00				
Deviation		4,80		0,84		2,41		2,05		6,89				
Average FR		0,88		0,24		1,00		0,82		6,18				

Source: Own elaboration (2024)

When evidencing, table 2, for the sensory dynamic indicator of perception, it is observed that for item 1, the surveyed managers responded to the question takes into account the needs of their customers to sell their products; with 0.29% the subjects answered in disagreement, 8.82% in total disagreement.

For item 2, 0.29% chose the alternative of agreement, 1.47% neither agree nor disagree, 0.88% disagree, 6.47% strongly disagree, when asked the question the products you sell seeks to fulfill a desire. In reference to item 3, 0.59% of the surveyed administrators chose the option, neither agree nor disagree with the question offers their products taking into account what is at the forefront, 1.76% disagree and 6.76% totally disagree, for the other options (agree and totally agree) the percentage was 0%.

For the subliminal perception indicator, in item 4, with respect to the question, there is advertising in some medium to attract customers to buy, 3.24% stated that they totally agree, 0.6% in agreement, 1.76% neither agree nor disagree, 0.29% disagree and 3.23% strongly disagree. With reference to item 5, the surveyed administrators responded as follows to the question "allow their customers to try or touch the products that sell products; 1.18% strongly agree, 0.29% agree, 1.18% neither agree nor disagree, 0.88% disagree and 5.58% strongly disagree.

The data shown in the table shows that for the closure of the consumer perception dimension, the average value was 1.90, cataloged, within the scale of interpretation of average as low presence. The highest standard deviation was 6.80 in the alternative totally disagree, in second place, with 4.80 in total agreement, 2.41 neither in agreement nor in disagreement, 2.05 in disagreement and finally with 0.84 in agreement. All this reflects a low presence of administrators in terms of their perception of the consumer.

From a financial perspective, the low presence of strategies aimed at consumer perception evidenced in the results represents a risk for the profitability and sustainability of the commercial establishments analyzed. Limited management of consumer perception reduces loyalty and purchase recurrence, directly affecting revenue stability and the business's ability to stay competitive in the market. These findings are consistent with contemporary approaches, which indicate that a poor customer experience negatively impacts financial performance and the creation of economic value in the long term.

This has little or low incidence with the author Solomon (2008) who points out the process of perception and consumer behavior in a broader and more practical way. Their approach encompasses the entire process, from selection and purchase to product use and disposal, providing a more comprehensive perspective on how perceptions influence each stage of the consumption cycle.

CONCLUSIONS AND FINAL REFLECTIONS

At the end of this research, whose objective is to analyze the perception of consumer behavior in the Special Tourist and Cultural District of Riohacha. It was concluded that the perception of consumer behavior in Riohacha shows that consumers highly value the quality of service and customer service, which significantly influences their purchasing decisions. In addition, sensory and subliminal perception plays a crucial role in customer satisfaction and loyalty, highlighting the importance of a marketing strategy that considers these perceptual aspects.

In this sense, it is concluded that the perception of consumer behavior not only influences purchasing decisions, but also constitutes a determining factor for the profitability and financial sustainability of commercial establishments in the Special Tourist and Cultural District of Riohacha. The absence of strategies aimed at managing consumer perception limits the generation of economic value and compromises the financial stability of businesses in the medium and long term.

Recommendations

Taking into account the conclusions of the research, it can be said that the continuous review and improvement of the processes that are developed in an organization is a vital activity that allows them to remain in the market and achieve higher levels of usefulness. That is why, as a final contribution of the research, a series of recommendations are specified that seek to improve consumer behavior.

Improvement in the sensory experience: Companies must focus on improving the sensory experience of their customers, using elements such as music, lighting and aromas in their establishments to create a pleasant and attractive environment that encourages purchases.

Personalized marketing strategies: Since consumer perception can vary significantly depending on cultural and economic factors, it is advisable to design personalized marketing strategies that are tailored to the specific demographic and psychographic characteristics of different market segments.

Additionally, it is recommended that commercial establishments integrate consumer perception management as part of their financial strategy, orienting their decisions towards customer loyalty and the generation of sustainable income. This will reduce the costs associated with attracting new consumers and strengthen the financial stability of businesses over time.

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