### Olfactive aesthetic experience within the servicescape: the olfactive aesthetic experience as means to provide a new perception of the servicescape

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**ABSTRACT:** From the points of view of Service Design, Services, Marketing and Communication, the odors can contribute to the provision of a given unit of satisfaction to the users of the service offered in a certain servicescape, with the potential to intervene in affective aspects. The specialized literature pointed to a gap on the Aesthetic dimension of Services, including the aesthetics of the odors. In this context, the problem that guided this research was based on the following question: how to use the olfactive aesthetic experience to provide a new perception of the servicescape by the user/client? The objective was to identify the relevant aspects of the olfactive aesthetic experience as a means to provide a new perception of the users/clients regarding the servicescape. The research has an exploratory and qualitative nature, with the application of a bibliographic review and a survey. Results show that the olfactive emotional aspects evoked in a servicescape have the potential to create and reinforce both positive and negative moods in users.

**Keywords:** Aesthetics of odors. Servicescape. Aesthetic experience. Affective aspects. Atmosphere.

#### 1 INTRODUCTION

Odors are emotions inducers and their effects are present in all cultures (CHREA *et al.*, 2009). Man can feel and distinguish over 10 thousand different odors (SCARDUA, 2008). Olfaction has direct participation in the palate and most of which man identifies as 'taste' is, essencially, scent (ACKERMAN, 1992; SCARDUA, 2008). From the five human senses, olfaction is the most complex (MCGINLEY; MCGINLEY, 2002). Besides supplying 80% of the taste sensations during a meal, it also plays an important role as a defense mechanism, creating a disgust reaction to bad and irritating odors (MCGINLEY; MCGINLEY, 2002; SCARDUA, 2008).

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The qualitative aspects of the user/client experience through the service journey of one associated to a Product+Service System (PSS) have, in the visceral perceptions, the most immediate impact dimension in its experience. Among the visceral perceptions, odor is one of the senses that still shows understanding gaps regarding its dynamics when eliciting aesthetic perceptions.

Researches conducted (RÉTIVEAU; CHAMBERS IV, 2004; SCHIFFMAN; SUGGS; SATTELY-MILLER, 1995) have shown that the olfative experience is directly linked to its hedonic factor, with potential to influence the human affection. For example, pleasant odors can elicit positive emotions, while unpleasant odors can elicit negative emotions (CHREA *et al.*, 2009; RÉTIVEAU; CHAMBERS IV, 2004).

In this context, it is essential to understand how the users' aesthetic experience can be influenced by the visceral aspects, that is, those aspects which cause an immediate emotional impact, automatically exciting one or more of the human senses (olfaction, hearing, sight, touch and taste). Costa (2017) showed that the aesthetic experience, in regard to Design aspects, traverses the three levels of the brain processing: visceral, behavioral, and reflective (NORMAN, 2008). Thus, one should use the parsimony when considering an aesthetic experience, having approached only one of the brain processing levels. However, given the inherent limitation of research and the need for a deepening in the odor's aesthetics study, this present research will be limited to the odor's aesthetics in its visceral ambit, having as background the Service Design.

The problem that guided this present research raised out of the question: how to use an olfactive aesthetic experience to provide a new perception to the servicescape user/client? As a general objective, it was aimed to identify the relevant aspects of the olfative aesthetic experience able to provide a new perception regarding to the servicescape, alongside users/clients. The research developed is of an exploratory and qualitative character and for its effectiveness, a bibliographic

review and a survey were used. The results show that the use of olfactory stimuli when evoked in a servicescape can elicit and reinforce both positive and negative moods in users.

### 2 THE OLFACTORY AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE OF USERS WITHIN THE SERVICESCAPE

Experiments have shown that odors affect human cognition and behaviour, being their effects similar to those produced by affective stimuli from other perceptual modalities (COSTA, 2017; CHEBAT; MICHON, 2003; ILMBERGER *et al.*, 2001; MILLOT, 2009). Other experiments have shown that the olfactory experience causes physiological changes, impacting on skin conductance and heart rate, which are related to the affective feedbacks (HEUBERGER et al., 2001; PÖSSEL, AHRENS; HAUTZINGER, 2005). Still, the experiences with odors have potential to elicit autobiographic memories. Such are intense affective memories, that were already forgotten (CHU, 2008; CHU; DOWNES, 2000). These effects are generally interpreted as interdependence between olfaction and affection, juxtaposed in neural systems (PHILLIPS; HEINING, 2002) and were confirmed through evidence by neuroimaging (HERZ et al. 2004; ROYET *et al.*, 2003). In this context, and under the Service Design ('SD') standpoint, the olfactory aspects can contribute with the provision of a given service users' satisfaction unity, offered in a certain servicescape (COSTA; SANTOS 2016).

The 'SD' circumscribes to the design of any service experience, the process and the strategy to supply it (MORITZ, 2005). Therefore, the 'SD' should seek to understand the user/client, organization and market, with the aim to develop ideas which can be translated into feasible solutions and implement them. The 'SD' must approach the services functionality and form, with two clear objectives: in the user/client scope, it must be ensured that the services interfaces be useful, usable and desirable, and in the service supplier scope, it must be ensured that such interfaces

be effective, efficient and distinguished (MAGER, 2007). Under this perspective, the 'SD' purpose is to transform the delivered service into something useful, usable, effective, efficient and desirable.

The specialized literature shows gaps regarding to the Services Aesthetics (COSTA, 2017; FREIRE, 2011), including the Olfactory Aesthetics. Still, the tools available for the measurement of the affective aspects elicited by odor are dependent upon user's cultural issues and memory.

To broaden the understanding of people's behavior in a given environment, researches in the Marketing and Communication ambit about the Sales Spot (PDV) may submit important elements. Although with different purposes, these studies provide inputs to be explored in other environments.

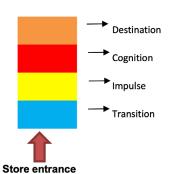
### 2.1 Environment, Layout and Atmosphere

Investigation about one's behaviour in each environment may find parameters in the layouts study on retail stores. There are studies showing that the store layout affects the user/client behaviour during the purchases period (BAKER; GREWAL; PARASURAMAN, 1994). Still, there are studies that point to a store design as being a critical factor of success for a retail business (ERDEM; OUMLIL; TUNCULP, 1999).

Strunck (2011) details the information that in the study of retail stores layout, it is possible to delimit the areas in which the user/client interacts with the store and makes their purchasing decisions. In this sense, it is possible to identify the areas in which the user/client can be more influenced either by a good service or by a good exhibition of services/products. In the Image 1 it is possible to visualize each area and, next, their characteristics are detailed.

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**Image 1** - Retail store layout.

**Source:** The authors (2018).

It is in the blue area, called "transition", where the change from normal walking speed to a speed fit to purchasing occurs. It is in this area that the user/client pays attention to the visceral stimuli, with the aim to find what he is searching for. As an example, it is possible to mention the giant Lego dolls located near the entrance of Lego stores in Brazilian malls, as a way of attracting the shoppers' attention. It is in the yellow area, called "impulse area", where the services/products offer that are not of user/client interest, should concentrate, but have a great chance of being acquired, due to the communication stimuli. Lego stores usually display products related to movies or cartoons It is in the red area, called "cognition area", where it is recommended that services/products which require more time to be experienced, be available. It is recommended to provide in this area the personalized service to the user/client. Lego stores display the products richer in details and visual appeal, like collectible dolls, which demand greater care from sellers.

Lastly, in the green area, called "destination", it is recommended to put services/products which are the basis of the institution portfolio, that is, those services/products by which the store is acknowledged. Located in the green area of

Lego stores are the spare parts from which the shopper can choose the items which will be part of his or her collection. Customers who own toys from this specific brand will be able to look for new pieces to improve their own collections.

The scope of brand communication, in line with the layout, can also be evidenced from the identification of perceived values by users/clients. Such values are the emotional (the affective relation towards the brand) and the functional and logical, responsible for the purchase rationality (STRUNCK, 2011).

On the other hand, Woodruff (1997) points out that the quality propagated by companies as a value, is no longer a source of competitive differentiation. The internal processes of an organization should be directed to deliver values aligned with what the user sees as worthwhile.

Besides layout and communication, there are factors linked to aesthetic perceptions. The set of such factors was named by Kotler (1973) as "atmosphere". The retail atmosphere is composed of a physical and emotional combination, with tangible and intangible attributes (MCGOLDRICK; PIEROS, 1998) and may be considered as a psychological attribute of the store image (TURLEY; CHEBAT, 2002).

Puccinelli et al. (2009), on the other side, reiterate that the "atmosphere" has a potential to influence on the purchase experience, interacting with the user/client perceptions and afecting his behaviour. The "atmosphere" dimensions of a store are constructed by the visceral aspects (MCGOLDRICK; PIEROS, 1998). These non-verbal communication means work because the symbols are exchanged between sender and receiver. It is a communication perceived by other biases (BELLIZZI; CROWLEY; HASTY, 1983) and that make it possible the creation of a holistic environment. In this environment, it is possible to analyze the reactions of employees and users/ clients, shown by cognitive, emotional and psychological factors (BITNER, 1992). These reactions delimit the behavior, which can be of approach or withdraw (SCHOLOSSER, 1998).

Aiming to synthesize the perception of some authors about the communication for the creation of the atmosphere in an environment, it is shown in Table 1:

**Table 1** - Classification of the communication tools in a store atmosphere.

The main sensory channels in the atmosphere are sight, hearing, olfaction and touch.	Sight: color, lighting, size, form; Hearing: volume and tone;
	Olfaction: freshness and essence;
	Touch: softness, tenderness and temperature.
Retail traditionally uses colors to project an image or to create the desired atmosphere.	Color can be used both to attract and to increase comfort, with the purpose of stimulating the customer to stay in the store longer
The stimuli combination allows to create a store atmosphere that can be both motivating and enjoyable.	The store atmosphere is created by a combination of music, colors, crowding and other stimuli, such as floor, ceiling, lighting, pillars and the services offered.
Servicescape: the impact of physical factors on the behavior of customers and service providers.	Environment conditions: temperature, air quality, noise, music; Room: store layout, equipments, furniture; Signaling: symbols, artifacts and
	project an image or to create the desired atmosphere.  The stimuli combination allows to create a store atmosphere that can be both motivating and enjoyable.  Servicescape: the impact of physical factors on the behavior of customers and service

Turley and Milliman (2000)	The broad categories that create the store atmosphere are external variables, internal general factors, layout and design factors, sales and products exhibition area and human variables.	External variables: architecture, style and stores around;  Internal general factors: floor, lighting, color scheme, music, width of corridors, ceiling;  Layout and design: design and allocation of space, grouping, flow;  Sales and products exhibition area: signaling, walls decoration, price signaling;  Human variables: characteristics of the employees, uniforms, crowding and privacity areas.
Ballantine; Jack and Parsons (2010)	The atmosphere must be viewed from a broad and holistic perspective, since stimuli are not independent experiences, being that there is interrelation among them.	Attractiveness stimuli: lighting, auditory stimuli, room, colors, layout, product arrangement and displays, and other store design features;  Easiness stimuli: comfort, crowding, lighting products arrangement (as facilitators) and employees.

**Source:** The authors (2018).

Finally, there is a need for reflection, with a view to the retail atmosphere and its impact on the affective perspective of the user/client. It is observed, in current days, that the user gives importance to the products/services functional value. As such, this user/client is increasingly eager for pleasures, aesthetic experiences and communicational or playful experiences. So, it is understood that excitement and sensations are marketed, and it is the lived experience that one buys/enjoys. This makes the user/client more or less resemble an experience collector (LIPOVETSKY, 2007).

#### **3 RESEARCH METHOD**

This present research, of exploratory and qualitative nature, was developed in 3 phases: 1) literature review (RB); 2) pilot test and 3) survey execution for data collection through the use of RPE-Cheiro (COSTA, 2017). The 'RB' was carried out in order to delimit a panorama of scientific productions in the areas of Service Design, aesthetics and affectivity.

The following databases were consulted: Scielo, CAPES, Science Direct, Scopus and Ebsco. The following keywords were used: Odor, Aesthetics, Service Environment, Atmosphere, Odors, Aesthetics, Servicescape, Atmosphere. Only peer-reviewed articles published in the last 5 years were considered.

The pilot test was carried out in order to ensure that the third phase occurred properly. On June 28, 2015, on the premises of a public hospital in the city of Curitiba - PR, the pilot test was carried out with 7 volunteers, selected by convenience. The survey was conducted by the first author and three assistants. Only people aged from 20 to 55, located at the reception during the time of the research were considered (according to data provided by the hospital, 20 to 55 years is the most frequent age group attending the institution). Participants were selected for the research based on their willingess to participate in the research.

As the results proved to be adequate, the next step was to start the survey, that occurred from June 23, 2015 to July 11, 2015. After the collection, data were tabulated and analyzed with the use of the 'Spearman's correlation coefficient' and the 'Signal Test', since the obtained data are of non-parametric statistical character.

### **4 RESULTS AND ANALYSIS**

Data obtained originated from the RPE-Cheiro together with 100 patients. These indicated the emotions experienced and the emotions they would like to experience (desired), as well as their intensity degree, considering the odors present in the servicescape. Through the use of the 'Spearman's correlation coefficient', with the significance level of 1%, the significant correlations (p-value less than 0.01) were pointed out and are shown in the Table 02. Note that disgust and discontent emotions are directly correlated, that is, in the analyzed servicescape, the more disgust the respondents felt, the greater the discontent they also felt. In contrast, the emotions wonder, and distraction presented a weak correlation. Note that the negative emotions presented the highest correlations. The same does not happen on the opposite side, because there is the presence of positive pairs: Happy/Serene and Serene/Renewed.

**Table 2** - Correlations among odor-elicited emotions in the analyzed service scape.

OLFACTION (Higher correlation)		OLFACTION (Lower correlation)		
	Emotion	R	Emotion	R
1	Disgusted/Discontent	0.805327	Surprised/Distracted	0.277448
2	Indecisive/Melancholic	0.766206	Tranquil/Surprised	0.281849
3	Discontent/Angry	0.759466	Happy/Serene	0.291843
4	Disgusted/Fear	0.754517	Renewed/Indecisive	0.292172
5	Disgusted/Annoyed	0.738558	Serene/Indecisive	0.297454
6	Disgusted/Angry	0.731298	Happy/Indecisive	0.301581
7	Disgusted/Displeased	0.702952	Soothed/Melancholic	0.317520
8	Indecisive/Displeased	0.700564	Surprised/Indecisive	0.323819
9	Displeased/Annoyed	0.691112	Serene/Renewed	0.323827
10	Fear/Annoyed	0.690984	Amused/Displeased	0.324507

**Source:** The authors (2018).

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To verify if there was significant difference between the degrees of the emotions experienced/desired, it was applied the 'Signal Test'. When p<0.05, it means that there was a significative difference between which was expected, and which was experienced. In Table 03, highlighted in yellow, emotions are presented which were expected to be experienced more than these were effectively experienced. Highlighted in blue, emotions are found which were experienced more than it was expected. For example: the respondents expected to feel more joy, however, they experienced less of which they expected. Still, they experienced more fear besides that which was also expected. Such environment can arouse/reinforce rejection behaviors in the users/clients.

**Table 3** - Difference among the experienced and desired emotion degrees in the analyzed servicescape.

	Emotion	р	Experienced emotion	Desired emotion
1	Нарру	0.000000	2.95	4.62
2	Tranquil	0.000011	2.8	4.04
3	Soothed	0.000001	2.11	3.92
4	Relieved	0.000011	2.11	3.75
5	Serene	0.012193	2.69	3.49
6	Fear	0.000004	1.25	0.38
7	Disgusted	0.002200	0,77	0.27
8	Annoyed	0.008829	0,71	0.32
9	Displeased	0.033895	0.57	0.23
10	Melancholic	0.026500	0.56	0.23

**Source:** The authors (2018).

Although it is not possible to generalize, since these are non-parametric data, such data show that effective actions must be implemented to improve the user experience in the servicescape, whereas there is a predominance of negative visceral emotions. The store atmosphere must be reconsidered with the aim to

elicit a positive affective environment. Effective actions must be prioritized which lead users/clients to perceive the institution values and to invest in improvements, in the rational/functional aspects, as well as in the affective aspects that compose the servicescape. Thus, the store atmosphere must be reconsidered so that the affective environment experienced can align with what is desired by the user/client. Costa (2017) showed as a suggestion the creation of olfactory zones. Such idea can be used to align the store layout with the service moments, in line with the perspective of creating and reinforcing a positive mood in the users/clients.

#### **5 CONCLUSION**

The present research brings considerations that involve both the theoretical aspects and the results of the survey application for the analysis of a servicescape. In this way, it was possible to elucidate part of the theoretical gap involving the Services Aesthetics, regarding the users/client's olfactory perception. In this sense, the first conclusion reached is that odors, in fact, interfere with the qualitative aspects of the users/clients' experience along the services journey. This finding is supported by the theoretical analysis of the concepts explored by Strunck (2011) for the creation of an ideal environment of a store that seeks to provide well-being to the users and, also, by the analysis of the empirical application results occurred in the analyzed servicescape. From the comparative analysis between these two realities, it was possible to note the visceral condition of the users/client's aesthetic perception. At the same time, the affective environment elicited by odors in the analyzed servicescape showed that there are consistent correlations between the emotions experienced. Besides, there are significative differences among the experienced and desired emotions. Thus, it is understood that any action in the servicescape atmosphere, with the aim to create/reinforce a positive mood in the user/clients, should consider the contribution of this visceral aspect in providing the users/clients satisfaction. Another aspect that stands out in this investigation

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is related to memory evocation that, according to the bibliographic survey, can be stimulated by a positive bias. With such understanding, a servicescape could be designed in such a way as to rescue pleasant visceral aesthetic perceptions. Besides the memory aspect, the layout of a given servicescape could be planned according to the parameters of a retail store. In this sense, in each area of user/client interaction with the environment it would be constructed an atmosphere to be perceived in the aspects of well-being, utility, efficiency and desirability. These evidences result in relevant contribution for designers, architects and health care professionals who seek to construct visually pleasing environments, but leave aside other types of aesthetic perception, especially the olfactory.

One solution for the analyzed servicescape is the evocation of the most adequate emotions to each experience that makes up the previous steps. This happens due to the disposition of emotionally balanced individuals to engage in clearer lines of thought. Therefore, by comparing the parameters utilized in retail stores, the users from the analyzed servicescape could be impacted by their correspondent stimuli in each phase. This way, the area correspondent to the blue pattern, as proposed by Strunk (2011), could be the reception space, with a corresponding olfactory chamomile stimulus (FARKAS, 2013). The yellow area indicated in retail could encourage trust in the servicescape, with a corresponding orange scent (FARKAS, 2013). The red could remain as a cognition area where the servicescape users learn about the treatment to be employed. In this case, the corresponding aroma is that of cedar (FARKAS, 2013). Finally, the use of green indicates the destination area where the users can receive the treatment and feel comfortable. In this case the recommended aromas are those of bergamot and lavender (FARKAS, 2013).

Other than the suggestions of olfactory stimuli there is certainly room for possibilities of the use of different colors to indicate each area of this servicescape.

From the comparative analysis between these two realities, it was possible to note the visceral condition of the users/client's aesthetic perception. At the same time, the affective environment elicited by odors in the analyzed servicescape showed that there are consistent correlations between the emotions experienced. Besides, there are significative differences among the experienced and desired emotions.

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