



Don't Overlook the Sensory Experience at Your Branches

◆ branch strategies customer experience

Summary: As CFIs strive to make branches and in-person experiences for customers more appealing, the importance of the sensory experience should not be overlooked. We discuss why factoring in those experiences makes good sense.

Flavored water has been popular for years, but now there is a way to get it by drinking everyday tap water flavored entirely through the power of suggestion. With evidence showing that taste is influenced by a neurological reaction known as [retronasal olfaction](#), several companies have begun marketing water bottles that use scent discs to trick people's brains into thinking they are drinking flavored water when they are merely smelling a particular fruit scent.

The impact of the human olfactory sense extends to everything from the way things taste to the memories people have and even their emotions, so it is not surprising that a growing number of businesses are waking up to the importance of the sensory experience for customers.

CFI initiatives aimed at making bank branches more welcoming and appealing for customers should involve as many aspects of humans' five senses as possible, from sight and sound to smell and touch. According to data from Mood Media, [90% of people are more likely to return](#) to brick-and-mortar businesses if they find the atmosphere enjoyable, particularly the visuals, the music played, and the scent. In fact, [43% of global consumers](#) admit to being influenced to make purchases based on digital signage they have come across within physical businesses.

Sensory Lessons from Brick-and-Mortar Retail

These realities have not been lost on the business world, which, in some cases, has gone even further with such efforts. Take Walmart, which this past summer began efforts to cater the store experience to people with sensory disabilities. In July and August, the retail giant began experimenting with quiet shopping hours on set days, when stores were instructed to turn off the music, dim their lighting, and replace any moving picture advertisements with stationary alternatives. The initiative was so well received that the retailer recently implemented [permanent sensory-friendly hours](#) on a daily basis from 8 a.m. to 10 a.m. in each of its stores.

Starbucks has also undertaken efforts to make its locations sensory-friendly for customers. In 2022, the coffee chain began efforts to create more inclusive digital and physical experiences for people by [introducing new ways for customers to communicate](#), both visually and audibly. This includes the availability of braille menus in its stores within the US and Canada and speech-to-text technology that makes it easier for individuals with communication challenges to interact with employees.

Creating a Better Sensory Experience at Your Branch

As CFIs undertake efforts to enhance the appeal and inclusiveness of branches for customers across the board, it is important to think about the sensory experience as well. Following are a few specific things CFIs should consider when implementing such initiatives:

- **Pleasing design.** The first impression customers get from a bank branch is its appearance. It’s important to make sure each aspect of your branch is pleasing to the majority of people, from simple and clean landscaping to a soothing and calming color palate within. Remember that everything from your organization’s logo to the color scheme of your branch, your advertising, and even your website will impact the overall impression and experience that customers have with your business. For instance, when it comes to logo and branding, red and blue are popular colors for more traditional financial institutions, as they convey feelings like trust and confidence. Blue, green, and white are considered soothing colors for branches.
- **Soothing décor.** While digital signage can be a good way to catch the attention of younger customers and communicate multiple messages to branch visitors, CFIs may want to consider embracing Walmart’s approach. Not only can providing specific days and hours when lighting, visuals, and music are reduced to help individuals with sensory issues, but it can also create a more relaxing atmosphere for staff and other customers.
- **Helpful technology.** Though many banks already have braille options for customers, CFIs would be well-served by investigating new and [emerging technology offerings that make it easier for individuals with special needs](#) to interact with bank employees and any services your organization offers.
- **Appealing music.** The importance of the type of music played within businesses is not unique to retailers or restaurants. It should go without saying that the music played within your organization should not be too loud, should be somewhat mellow, and should appeal to the widest possible group. Playing the latest pop songs may appeal to younger customers, but it could prove off-putting to older demographics.
- **Welcoming smells.** Realtors have long encouraged people selling homes to bake cookies or bread in advance of open houses, but CFIs should look for air fresheners that are subtle and not too overwhelming. According to an article from Harvard Business Review, bank executives should [ensure branch offices are decorated with leather and wood](#), as the appearance and aroma of both exude the suggestion of wealth to people.

Providing a superior customer service experience, particularly within bank branches, necessitates more than just knowledgeable and responsive employees. The sensory experience that customers have within physical locations can also have a significant impact on their overall impression of and satisfaction with your organization

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Treasury	Yields	MTD Chg	YTD Chg
3M	5.40	-0.05	0.98
6M	5.26	-0.12	0.50
1Y	4.81	0.04	0.04
2Y	4.34	0.09	0.09
5Y	3.94	0.09	0.09
10Y	3.97	0.09	0.09

30Y	4.11	0.08	0.08
FF Market		FF Disc	IORR
5.33		5.50	5.40
SOFR		Prime	QBER
5.38		8.50	5.32

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