

Words decide what we eat – How sensory descriptive attributes on restaurant menus influence our food choice

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Abstract

Sensory marketing has become increasingly important in the way brands present their products. Especially food presentations make use of consumers' senses in many ways already. Restaurant menus for example can be seen as such a form of presentation, with the goal of describing the dishes the restaurant offers as appealing as possible for customers. Food presentations extensively use sensory descriptive attributes, however little research has been done so far on the specific benefits of using sensory descriptive attributes. This thesis intends to answer the question to what extent the use of sensory descriptive attributes on restaurant menus influences a customer's taste evaluations, quality evaluations and purchase decision. A field experiment tested the theoretically developed conceptual framework. In the field experiment, the menus from the restaurant Karma Food in Vienna included descriptive attributes in the experimental condition, while these attributes were absent in the control condition. Mean differences among the constructs of interest revealed that sensory descriptive attributes on restaurant menus have a significant influence on the customers' food consumption behavior. The results not only contribute to the understanding of the role sensory attributes in explaining consumer behavior, but also offer important practical implications for other restaurants on their menu presentation strategy.