

Explain and discuss  
the ways in which  
culture and  
experiences influence  
our perce...

[Psychology](#)



Taste and smell Culture is one of the factors that determine product experience. Perception with senses is influenced by personal biases and things learned. Further, the environment, emotions, and all other things around determine ones sensory experience. Smell, touch, sight and sound are some of the sensory experiences. Taste and smell are used by animals to ascertain the environment. Taste is used to determine the flavor of food or any other substance, smell is part of the sensory experience interconnected with taste while inhalation of chemical odor from the air determines a person's sense of smell.

According to Schifferstein and Hekkert (2011), culture is one of the determinants of product experience. The authors point out that the determination of an adult's food experience can be done by inquiring of the cultural experience or ethnicity. Odors experience varies depending on the cultural factors. For example, wintergreen is perceived as candy odor in the United States while the perception in the UK is quite different, whose experience of the same product is medicinal. Preference and experience of food products determine taste, which can be explained by the Korean food product known as Kimchi. Kimchi is widely accepted in most parts of Korea. However, Europeans and Americans do not accept Kimchi because it tastes salty and sour.

Religions and moral taboos are also some of the cultural experiences influencing taste and preference of food. Muslims, Jews, Indians and few African tribes do not accept certain foods because of cultural experience. Dietary avoidance is common in those religions. Muslims and Jews do not eat pork, while eating beef in India is viewed as a taboo. Taste and smell are

chemical experiences because completion of sensory experience happens only after chemical contact with cells in the body. Food contents are dissolved in the saliva and come into contact with the tongue. The tongue is a sensory organ that contains taste buds which convert chemical compounds in food to neural impulses, which the relay information to the brain regarding the food tasted (Nevid, 2007).

The brain does interpretation of the impulses transmitted from the receptors. This is done to give meaning to stimuli. Generated impulses travel through neural pathways to the spinal cord and brain. The brain relays impulses to the right place for stimuli perception. The taste buds receive chemical inputs from food as mentioned. Taste buds have neurons connected to them, which combine together forming nerves travelling to the medulla through the brainstem and convey information to the thalamus. However, cultural and experience influence tastes as mentioned. Food stuffs such as iguanas are less valued in United States making it unavailable in most restaurants while populations in Central America eats iguana because of experience since their ancestors used to eat wild iguana. Taste can also be affected by learning developed at early age. For example, the foodstuff a breastfeeding mother eats changes the taste of a child in later life (Weiten, 2012).

Odor is converted to smell by the olfactory epithelium which contains odor receptors that are stimulated on breathing in air. According to the lock-and-key theory, odor molecules excite olfactory receptors. The theory states that the odor molecules excite olfactory receptors in the olfactory epithelium. The cells in the epithelium convert odor to neural impulses on excitement. The impulses travel to the olfactory bulb of the brain through the olfactory nerve.

The information is then passed to the limbic system and cortex. The limbic system processes emotional and motivational activities. Emotional reactions are common on encountering certain smells (Pastorino & Doyle-Portillo, 2012).

#### References

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