

Audio-Tech Business Book Summaries



In this issue:

- **Learn...**
why traditional advertising is no longer effective now that consumers are barraged by 3,000 brand messages each day.
- **Discover...**
how to build marketing campaigns that appeal to all five senses through the effective use of images, sound, smell, taste, and touch.
- **Transform...**
your advertising efforts by crafting a Holistic Selling Proposition that adopts the characteristics of religious sensory experiences.
- **Revitalize...**
your brand by focusing on 12 components: picture, color, shape, name, language, icon, sound, behavior, service, tradition, ritual, and navigation.
- **Build...**
a market-leading sensory brand by using a six-step process, from conducting a sensory audit to evaluating the new brand.



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Brand Sense Build Powerful Brands through Touch, Taste, Smell, Sight, and Sound

by Martin Lindstrom

A summary of the original text.

The average consumer is bombarded with 3,000 brand messages a day, but very few of these ads make an impression on the mind. To bring branding into the 21st century, the most successful companies are using marketing campaigns that appeal to *all five* senses.

Based on the largest study ever conducted on how the senses influence the creation of brands, *Brand Sense*, by Martin Lindstrom, provides a new vision for building brands. The book has been endorsed by CEOs of Disney, Mattel, and McDonald's, and marketing guru Philip Kotler says that it offers "a treasury of ideas for bringing new life to your brands."

Lindstrom is one of the world's most distinguished branding experts, with 20 years of hands-on

experience as an advertising CEO and adviser to Fortune 500 companies. In *Brand Sense*, he reveals how to transform marketing strategies into positive business results that no brand builder can afford to ignore.



THE EVOLUTION OF BRANDING

The concept of branding is undergoing dramatic changes. Consider how it has evolved over the past half-century.

In the 1950s, branding focused on the *USP*, or *Unique Selling Proposition*, where no two products were alike.

The next stage, in the 1960s, brought the *Emotional Selling Proposition*, or *ESP*, where similar products were perceived as

different because of an emotional attachment. Think of Coke and Pepsi.

During the 1980s, the **Organizational Selling Proposition**, or **OSP**, emerged. The corporation behind the brand became the brand. Its philosophy distinguished it from others. For many years, Nike used this form of branding.

By the 1990s, brands had gained enormous strength in their own right, and the **Brand Selling Proposition**, or **BSP**, took over. The brand became stronger than the physical dimensions of the product. Consider Harry Potter, Pokemon, and Disney. The consumer became fixated on the brand itself, and the name of the brand was found on sheets, toothbrushes, and wallpaper.

Recently, technological innovation has paved the way for brands based on the **Me Selling Proposition**, or **MSP**, in which consumers take ownership of brands. Today, consumers can go to Web sites run by Nike and Levi's to customize products exactly to their individual needs and sizes.

And yet, branding is still on a steady decline. Several thousand new brands are introduced to consumers every year, which accounts for a large share of the \$244 billion spent on advertising in 2003. But fewer consumers are paying attention.

According to Nielsen Research, the number of men aged 18-34 watching prime-time television has declined by 5 percent. And even those who are tuning in to network TV are increasingly tuning out commercials. By 2007, 20 percent of U.S. households will have access to systems like TiVo that enable viewers to skip television ads.

The solution is to create branding messages that rely on all five senses, not just sight and sound. Think of religion, which taps into people's emotions through every sense, from the sight of flickering candles to the fragrance of burning incense to the taste of bitter wine to the sound of singing choirs to the feel of a wooden pew.

The future of branding will evolve beyond the MSP into the **Holistic Selling Proposition**, or **HSP**. HSP brands are those that not only anchor themselves in tradition, but also adopt characteristics of religious sensory experiences to leverage the concept of sensory branding as a holistic way of spreading the news. Each holistic brand has its own identity — one that is expressed in its every message, shape, symbol, ritual, and tradition, just as religion does today.

To understand to what extent religion could serve as the model for the future of branding, the author launched an extensive research project that investigated the role that each of the five senses would play in creating the ultimate bond between the consumer and the brand.

He teamed up with the global research institute Millward Brown. The project involved some 600 researchers around the world. Based on the results of that study, a clear picture of where brands are going, and what formula will work to promote them in the future, is emerging.

Let's take a look at how some companies are expanding their definition of brand to reach more people with the compelling messages that the Holistic Selling Proposition offers.



SOME COMPANIES ARE DOING IT RIGHT

We store our values and emotions in memory banks for each sense — image, sound, smell, taste, and touch. Events, moods, feelings, and even products in our lives are continuously imprinted in our memories, from the second we wake to the moment we sleep. However, most advertising messages that we're exposed to on a daily basis come to us through only two of the five senses: sight and sound.

When companies appeal to *all* of the senses, the impact can be astonishing. For example, buyers of automobiles consistently cite the “new-car smell” as one of the most gratifying aspects of their purchase. In reality, there is no such thing as a new-car smell. As the car leaves the production line, workers use aerosol cans to spray the aroma all over the interior.

Or consider this: At the end of the 1990s, Daimler Chrysler established an entire new department devoted solely to developing the sound of its car doors. Ten engineers were assigned to the task of creating the perfect sound for opening and closing the door. What they and other researchers had learned over the years was that people don't buy cars for performance or design. They buy them for the experience of the interior, including sound.

In another example, Kellogg's hired a Danish commercial music laboratory that specializes in simulating the “crunch” sound of breakfast cereals. Kellogg's had the lab create a unique crunch for its cornflakes that no other cereal has. The day the company introduced the new-sounding cereal, its market share increased. Instead of marketing a cereal that relied on two senses, sight and taste, Kellogg's could appeal to two more, sound and touch. By appealing to more senses, the company broadened its brand platform, and sold more products.

As a result of moves like this, over the next decade, we will witness seismic shifts in the way we perceive brands. Think of it as going from black and white television to high-definition color. And this process has been underway for a long time.

Back in 1973, most airline advertisements promoted the same features of their service: meals, comfort, and pricing. Singapore Airlines broke through those traditional branding barriers with their Singapore Girl, a brand figure so successful that she is displayed in Madame Tussaud's Museum in London.

What was different about Singapore Airlines? The answer lies in its successful attempt to appeal strictly to the emotional experience of air travel. By emphasizing smoothness and relaxation, it positioned itself not as an airline, but as an entertainment company.

A flight on Singapore was meant to be a complete sensory experience. Staff uniforms were made of the finest silk and matched the cabin décor. The flight attendants were all younger than 26 and had to be the same size, which was dictated by the size of the uniform. They were also styled right down to their makeup. Of course, they were all beautiful as well. They were all given strict instruction in how to speak, how to move, and how to serve meals. Even the cabin announcements were carefully scripted by an ad agency.

Singapore Airlines is just one example of a company that is creating stronger brands through sensory awareness. Let's examine how each of the five senses is engaged by different ad campaigns.

Coca-Cola is a very **visual** brand. Wherever there's Coke, there's red and white. Coca-Cola takes its colors extremely seriously. Before the 1950s, Santa Claus wore green. Coca-Cola changed that by having Santa wear red and white in its ads. The impact was enormous: In every shopping mall in the country, Santa now sports the Coke colors at Christmas time, sending a subtle signal to millions.

The second dimension that is heavily leveraged in today's brand-building process is the use of audio, or **sound**. Intel stands out as the company with the clearest, most distinct, consistent, and memorable use of sound. The "Intel Inside" jingle has been around since 1998, making the invisible visible. Since you can't see the chip the ads refer to, clever advertisers substituted the short, distinct sound used throughout all of Intel's advertising and brand-building campaigns. Research shows that more consumers remember the Intel tune than the company's logo.

The sense of **smell** is one of the most powerful senses because it is the only one we can't turn off. And yet, fewer than 3 percent of Fortune 1000 companies have even given a thought to establishing a unique aroma for their brands. By contrast, Singapore Airlines did this beginning in the 1990s, when it introduced its specially designed aroma. It was included in the flight attendants' perfume, on the hot towels offered before takeoff, and it permeated the fleet of planes. Anyone who's had the total Singapore experience will instantly recognize the subtle aroma.

The sense of touch is also widely ignored by advertisers. But Bang & Olufsen understands its power. Since its products first appeared in 1943, it has put as much detail into its design as it has into the quality of its sound. It invented the all-in-one remote control, for example, first introduced in 1985. It is heavy, solid, and quite distinct in the way it appeals to the sense of touch. This same sense of gravitas is designed into every Bang & Olufsen product, from telephones to speakers.

Brands that can incorporate **taste** can build a very strong brand platform. Yet fully 16 percent of the Fortune 1000 could add taste to their brand platform but haven't. Colgate is a company that stands out in the realm of taste. The flavor of its toothpaste is patented. Yet even Colgate could improve by extending its branded taste to toothbrushes, dental floss, and so on.

How can you create a sensory branding strategy at your own company? You have to start by *smashing your brand*. Let's take a closer look at this process.



SMASH YOUR BRAND

When Earl R. Dean of the Root Glass Company in Terra Haute, Indiana, was given a design job in 1915, he was told to create a bottle that could be recognized blindfolded. Taking his inspiration from the pod of the cocoa bean, he produced a bottle with ridged contours. This led to one of the most famous designs in history: the Coca-Cola bottle.

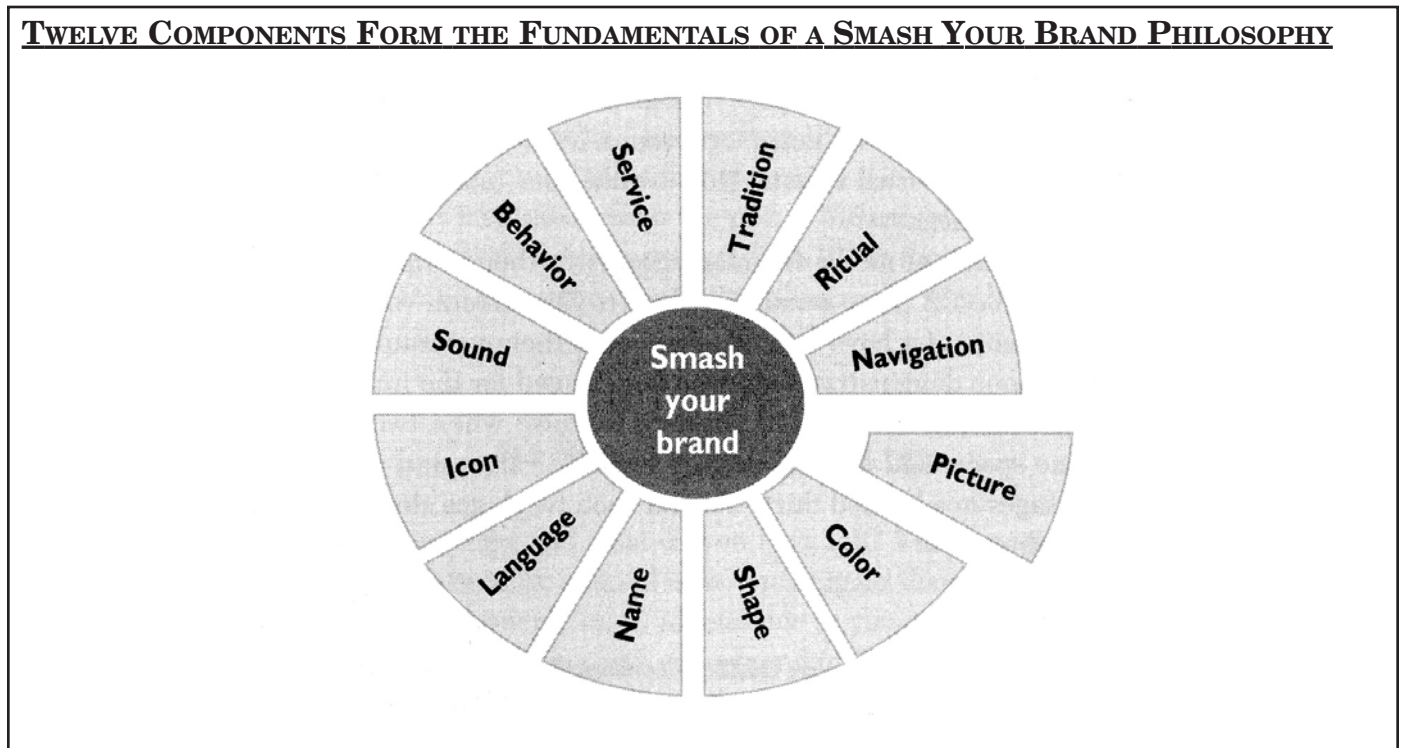
If you removed your logo, would your brand still be instantly recognizable? Smashing your brand means deconstructing it into all of its elements and seeing if each one works independently.

For example, if you removed the logo from a Coke bottle, everyone would still recognize it.

This goes for the copy, the colors, graphics, images — every element. The trick is to create each element so that it's able to stand alone, and yet is so integrated that it can take the brand to a whole new level of familiarity.

This process considers every possible consumer touch point with a view toward building or maintaining the image of the brand. The images, sounds, text and textures all need to become fully integrated components of the branding platform. Each element plays a role as vital as the logo itself.

There are 12 individual components to examine when doing this exercise, including picture, color, shape, name, language, icon, sound, behavior, service, tradition, ritual, and navigation.



1. A **picture** is literally worth more than a thousand words when it comes to branding. For example, famous faces wearing white mustaches are instantly recognizable as part of the “Got Milk?” campaign, which has run for more than a decade.
2. **Color** is just as important. As mentioned, Coca-Cola owns the color red in the United States. The careful use of color builds clear associations, and those associations can benefit your brand.
3. **Shape** is one of the most overlooked branding components. But certain shapes clearly stand for certain brands. Consider the shape of the Coke bottle, the McDonald's arches, or the Absolut vodka bottle.
4. **Names** are another way to reinforce the awareness of a brand. For example, McDonald's uses “Mc” in the names of products such as McMuffins, Big Macs, and McNuggets.

5. **Language** is the next important attribute to consider. For example, Disney owns the words "dream," "creativity," "fantasy," "smile," and "magic." More than 80 percent of the world's population directly associates these words with Disney.
6. **Icons** are the symbols that represent a brand. The Marlboro Man and Schweppes' use of bubbles suggest the power of icons. Successful icons help companies extend their commercial messages to new markets and products.
7. **Sound** is one of the primary attributes of a brand. Entire brands can be built with sound. CNN and Intel have consistently leveraged sound to embed their brands in consumers' minds.
8. **Behavior** refers to all of the service components of your brand. All of these must be consistent. For example, at Disney World's Animal Kingdom, the service staff in the jungle next to the tigers speak in a New Delhi accent.
9. **Service** is less tangible than some of the other elements shaping your brand, but it can be smashed just as easily. The key is underpromise and overdeliver. If you promise to respond to a customer's e-mail in 48 hours, do it in 24. If your warranty is for 12 months, don't charge for a repair a week after it expires.
10. **Tradition** refers to all of the elements that carry over from one experience with the brand to the next. For the James Bond movies, the traditions include fast cars, attractive women, and martinis that are "shaken, not stirred."
11. **Rituals** are another way to bond customers to a brand. For example, people who are devoted to Guinness beer follow a ritual for pouring the beer slowly into a glass tilted at 45 degrees until it is three-quarters full, then allowing the foam to settle before filling it to the top. The entire ritual can take four to five minutes.
12. **Navigation** means that the brand message travels well from one media channel to another. It should be consistent across your Web site, your cell phone campaigns, your store layout, your brochures, and your automated phone system.

By paying careful attention to these 12 dimensions of the brand platform, you can create a true emotional and sensory experience.



FROM 2-D TO 5-D BRANDING

Bonding with a brand, like bonding with people, requires a multi-sensory experience. The more sensory touch points you can leverage, the more powerful the bonding memories will be. Let's explore each of the five senses and how they can help bond consumers to your brand.

Sound is an extremely powerful motivator. In fact, it can be the deciding factor in a consumer's behavior. Findings published in the *Journal of Consumer Research* showed that the pace of background music affected service, spending, and traffic flow in stores and restaurants. The slower the music, the more people shop. When slow music is played in a restaurant, the bill is 29 percent higher than when fast music is played.

In an even more dramatic demonstration of the power of sound, the people on Mornington Peninsula in Australia stopped a crime wave by playing Bach and Mozart on every street after nightfall. The technique was so successful that the Port Authority Bus Terminal in New York City copied it.

IBM learned the hard way how important sound is. When it introduced its model 6750 electronic typewriter in the 1970s, it was completely silent. Typists rejected it until IBM added back some artificial sound.

Opportunities to leverage sound exist in almost every brand, from Nokia's famous musical tones to the Microsoft Windows start-up tune. If your company is not creating a sound that binds its customers to your brand, it is time now to join the wave.

Vision is the most powerful of the five senses. Understandably, it is the sense on which brand builders have traditionally concentrated. But the reality of our modern world is that visual messages and noise bombard us all day long. Visual clutter makes it hard to attract consumers by sight alone.

Nevertheless, shape and color can become indelibly wed to a brand under the right circumstances, from Hershey's kisses to the Hennessy XO cognac bottle. Just think of the impact the Hummer shape has had on car design. Even so, our world of visual overload demands a richer sensual experience.

Touch is the next most important sense. How a brand feels has a lot to do with what sort of quality we attribute to the product. Rightly or not, we tend to think that a wine bottle with a cork contains better wine than one with a screw-top. And 35 percent of consumers say the feel of a cell phone is more important than its look.

Touch is undeniably a powerful motivator in the marketplace. A British supermarket chain owned by Wal-Mart removed the wrapping from its house brand of toilet paper so that customers could compare its texture to leading brands. The opportunity to touch the product resulted in soaring sales.

It is revealing to note that a whopping 59 percent of consumers prefer their Coke in a glass bottle, even though it's the same drink when sold in cans or plastic. Never underestimate the power of the sense of touch.

Scent, likewise, is a broadband channel of communication, capable of evoking images, sensations, memories, and associations. There are about 1,000 primary odors, each with the potential to influence mood and behavior. That's why Rolls-Royce spent hundreds of thousands of dollars to reproduce the distinct smell of the 1965 Silver Cloud. The older cars were made of natural materials, such as wood, leather, and wool. The new ones, made of plastic, metal, and foam, simply didn't smell right.

Ford, Chrysler, and Cadillac all have custom-designed, branded aromas for their cars now, too. But other businesses are beginning to catch on. Instead of varying the colors on packaging as a way to signal flavor or quality, they're varying the scent. This serves to create a synergy between product, brand, and sensory experiences that hits the right note with consumers.

Smell is closely allied with taste. In fact, much of what we perceive as taste is actually smell. Smell without taste is obviously possible. But taste without smell is not. Clearly,

the use of taste in products is limited to those that you'd eat or drink, along with a few others like toothpaste. But there are still unexplored opportunities out there. For example, the smell and taste of toothpaste could be leveraged across the whole product line, including dental floss, toothbrushes, and toothpicks.

Each sense, then, can be leveraged to build a better, stronger, more durable brand. This cannot be done in isolation. The object is to ensure a positive synergy across a multitude of consumer touch points. Let's take a look at how this can be done.



CRAFTING A SENSORY BRAND

Branding has always been about establishing emotional ties between the brand and the consumer. As in any relationship, emotions are based on information gathered from the senses.

Consider how Ferrari extends its brand to new products by appealing to the senses. In 2004, the sports car company introduced its first notebook computer, the Ferrari 3000. It sounds like an odd marriage, and yet it shows how sensory synergy can transcend such first impressions. Stylish and sleek, the 3000 has a sensory appeal identical to that of the car. It's clad in the patented Ferrari red, and like the car, it has three coats of high-quality automotive paint and a brushed silver interior. When you start it up, you even hear the signature growl of the car itself.

In a similar move, Ferrari partnered with Olympus to produce a digital camera with the same sensory touch points. The heft, the fine lines, the fit and finish, all duplicate the feel of the famous racing car. This is an excellent example of leveraging several senses in a synergistic way.

That's why it's important to consider every possible sense to ensure a systematic integration of experience. This will stimulate the imagination, enhance your product, and bond your consumers to your brand. The first step in creating a sensory brand is to provide a stimulus that can be attached to your brand and your brand alone.

Hjem-Is, a home delivery ice cream company in Scandinavia, has been driving trucks through neighborhood streets, ringing a distinctive bell, for 30 years. As a result, the stimulus of that bell is identified with a particular brand of ice cream by half the country's population.

To achieve a branded stimulus takes time and careful planning. But branded stimuli create long-term loyalty. And enhancement increases this effect. For example, Texas Instruments has developed an exclusive touch for the keys of its calculators. As a result, TI's calculators feel completely different from other brands. The consumer may buy Texas Instruments calculators without ever being conscious of why other brands feel wrong. The best emotional bond is one that is unconscious and automatic.

The IBM ThinkPad notebook computer has managed to create that type of bonding. These laptops navigate with the trademarked TrackPoint mouse. Those who become accustomed to this system find it very hard to switch. Whether it's the TrackPoint mouse, a Nokia cell phone menu, or Apple's icons and setup, navigation is one of the most powerful ways to create a bond with the consumer. This type of sensory branding will add four important

dimensions to your brand:

1. *Emotional engagement.* In order to achieve emotional engagement, the sensory appeal of a brand has to have two essential ingredients: It must be unique to your brand, and it must become habitual.
2. *An optimized match between perception and reality.* Too many brands allow too wide of a gap between consumer perception and product reality. If quality is associated with weight, for example, and products get lighter due to high technology, then weight has to be added to meet the perception.
3. *Creation of a brand platform for product extension.* As each brand develops new products, the links may erode unless a careful brand extension strategy is in place. For example, Caterpillar makes both tractors and shoes. The common value is masculinity. The secret to achieving that link lies in sensory touch points, such as rubber and metal, as well as the colors and positioning strategy.
4. *Trademark.* Almost every aspect of a brand's sensory appeal can be trademarked. Each component, including smell, sound, feel, taste, and shape, has to be distinct. Harley-Davidson lost a famous court case when Yamaha and Honda successfully copied the sound of their engine before they had trademarked it.

Any company can build a sensory brand. What has emerged from the author's extensive research is a six-step process designed to achieve that.

The first step is to **conduct a sensory audit**. This means evaluating your brand from a sensory point of view. Among the questions to ask are: Would blindfolded customers recognize the brand? To what extent can the brand leverage its sensory branding appeal? And what needs to be done for the brand to achieve its potential?

Step two is **brand staging**. Look outside your industry for examples of companies that are using innovative approaches you can apply to your own business. For example, a furniture retailer like Ikea could learn from Disney how to build a brand that appeals to all of the senses. From the moment the customer pulls into the parking lot until the very end when he's packing his purchases in the trunk, Disney could impart a few hints to Ikea on how to give the customer a positive experience that he can see, hear, touch, smell, and taste.

Step three is **brand dramatization**. This step establishes your brand's personality. Ask yourself: Who are you? What feelings and emotions can be generated by enhancing your sensory appeal? What sensory priorities should be leveraged to perfect the perception of your brand? For example, as the technology of photography has changed from film to digital, Kodak must take advantage of the sense of touch that customers associate with the Kodak brand. Generations of families have held Kodak cameras and touched Kodak prints, which gives the company a major sensory branding opportunity.

Step four is **brand signature**. Each sensory component must be crafted to contribute to the complete sensory experience of the message. If the smell in the store is consistent with the smell when opening the box and later on when visiting the brand display at an exhibition, a sensory synergy takes place. If the sound used in the TV commercials and on the Web site continues in the store, greets you when you switch on the product and when you contact the call center for help, a synergy takes place.

Step five is **brand implementation**. Once you have a fully prepared plan for your multi-sensory branding, you need to develop a step-by-step implementation report for every department affected by the strategy. Unlike a traditional marketing initiative, sensory branding must involve research and development, sales, and operations as well.

Step six is **brand evaluation**. This involves stepping back for a critique of the new, improved brand. Ask three questions:

1. To what degree does the revised sensory brand manage to achieve the desired effect?
2. To what extent is the sensory appeal loyal to its heritage?
3. As a result of this sensory integration, is the brand still perceived as authentic?

As we've seen, exploring the sensory potential of your brand can provide major benefits. But these explorations must stay true to the core nature of your product. That's why the sensory audit is so important to this process. Let's conduct a sensory audit on three very different product types to see how they work.



MEASURING SENSES

Each of the brands being audited was put through a rigorous inventory test to see how it appealed to the various senses and what effect that appeal had in the marketplace. Regular users of the brand were surveyed, and each sensory experience was measured across three dimensions:

- First, did the sense impression make the consumer feel positive or negative about the brand?
- Second, how distinctive was the impression?
- Third, what specific memories and emotions were called up by the sensory experience?

This helped the company begin to build an inventory of existing sensory impressions. The next step was to identify how those impressions related to brand loyalty.

The top point on the scale of this inventory was achieved when the consumer made the brand his or her first choice. This category has been used successfully to predict purchasing behavior in numerous product and service categories around the world. The more people that select a brand as their first choice, the more sales revenues the brand will generate. And the greater the number of distinct senses that come to mind in connection with a brand, the more likely people are to make their existing brand their first choice.

The sensory experience is mediated through one of the three drivers of brand success:

1. Great brand experience
2. Clarity
3. Leadership

- *Great brand experience* means that consumers really enjoy using or consuming a given

brand more than others. They perceive it as the highest quality and enjoy it more than other choices.

- *Clarity* means that a given brand has a distinctive identity, or is measurably different from other brands.
- *Leadership* means that consumers perceive your brand as setting trends, being more authentic, or being the most popular brand.

In order to have the maximum effect on brand loyalty, the sense involved in the experience must come readily to mind and give a positive and distinctive impression. It must create some form of differentiation, contributing to perceptions related to either clarity or leadership in order to establish that loyalty. In other words, it's not so much what the experience is but rather how it is *created* that influences competitive advantage.

Coke and Pepsi provide a good comparison of the relative impact on the senses. They are both heavily dependent on taste. But Coke is perceived as being sharper, while Pepsi is perceived as being smoother. Coke drinkers feel slightly more positive about their brand, giving Coca-Cola the edge.

Sight had a significant effect on clarity for Coke, but not for Pepsi. In turn, clarity had a stronger influence on the consumption experience for Coke. The color red was the deciding factor. Interestingly, the Coke glass bottle elicited a strong positive response that was simply absent from the Pepsi drinker's experience. This suggests that the classic glass Coke bottle is a powerful emotional marker for signaling "the real thing" and one that Pepsi simply doesn't have.

In terms of eliciting emotional responses through the senses, one would think that home entertainment systems would offer numerous touch points. But people made weaker connections with the senses than expected when evaluating those products.

In all likelihood, the technical quality of picture and sound has gone beyond the boundary where subtle differences can be perceived. Touch may offer greater opportunities for differentiation. Nevertheless, Sony owners were more likely to think of sight, sound, and touch than Panasonic owners. As a result, one in four people are bonded to Sony, while far fewer have formed an emotional bond with Panasonic. But at this point in their development, both brands have an open-ended opportunity to leverage more sensory experiences in differentiating their products.

Soap is another product type to which consumers form strong emotional bonds. Dove and Irish Spring are two very different soaps that enjoy about equal market share. Dove is positioned as a moisturizing beauty bar that can be characterized by the word "softness." Irish Spring is a deodorant soap and can best be described as "invigorating." Yet both use sensory experiences to create clarity.

Smell, not touch, has the most influence in this category, and it is the more important driver for Irish Spring than for Dove. Irish Spring has a very distinctive smell that people describe as "fresh." Dove, on the other hand, has a very subtle scent, which people describe as "pure."

With Dove users, touch played a more important role than smell. Dove users feel that their brand is soft and creamy.

The sense of sight plays a supporting role, with the Irish Spring's green and white striations suggesting freshness, while Dove's white, curved bar hints at purity.

In the end, the conclusion seems to be that sight tends to play a supporting role in creating brand loyalty when compared with the other senses. Taste, touch, sound, and smell are intimately involved in creating the experience and therefore elicit a more powerful bond with a brand.



BRAND RELIGION

No brand has yet succeeded in achieving the level of dependence and trust that religions achieve — nor should we expect it to reach that level. But religion does provide a model in terms of offering wisdom and depth of meaning.

Brand builders can learn from the way religions communicate their essential message through myth, symbol, and metaphor. These stories, histories, and symbols captivate us and create an emotional bond that transcends rational analysis.

By contrast, branding has become an all-too-rational science. It's time for some rethinking, especially in today's atmosphere of uncertainty and danger. Between 1991 and 1997, sales of mainstream religious and spiritual books increased by 150 percent, compared with 35 percent for secular books. People crave an intense emotional connection today.

Some products have managed to achieve the passionate brand loyalty of religions. For example, some devoted Apple Computer users have tattooed the company's logo on their skin. In another case, a fan of David Beckham created a one-foot-high gold-leaf Buddha dedicated to the soccer star and placed it in Bangkok's Pariwas temple in Thailand. And in Japan, the cartoon character known as Hello Kitty has captivated millions for a quarter century and created a virtual cult of worshippers.

Harley-Davidson, Apple, and Coca-Cola are all brands that have incited a sort of religious intensity among their most passionate followers. Their appeal is far from rational. But the way they bond with their customers is the envy of many other corporations.

So what do you need to do to take a brand beyond its traditional loyal base of consumers toward a bonding that resembles a religious relationship?

The answer is to use the **10 rules of sensory branding**.

The first step is to ***create a unique sense of belonging***. Every religion fosters a binding sense of community. Within this community, belief can grow, be stimulated, and can cement relationships among the members of the congregation, creating a powerful feeling of belonging.

Second, ***create a sense of purpose***. The brand needs to reflect a clear purpose and should be represented by a visible, daring, or determined leader. A perfect example is Steve Jobs, who returned to an ailing Apple, and in less than a year managed to turn the company around — all for a salary of one dollar.

Third, ***take power from your competitors***. A visible enemy gives people an opportunity

to show their colors and align themselves with the team they most strongly identify with. Avis took aim at Hertz by declaring itself number two and promising: "We try harder." The slogan has stuck for 40 years.

Fourth, ***create a sense of authenticity***. Authenticity is an essential component of any religion's history, anecdote, and mythology. The same should be true for a brand. For the professional photographer, it's the Hasselblad camera. It has what the Japanese call *miryokuteki hinshitsu* — that is, quality that is above and beyond what is expected. It is this elusive but dazzling sense of something perfected that gives authenticity to a product.

Fifth, ***establish consistency***. This is an essential quality in an uncertain world. No matter where you go in the world, you can expect the same experience from certain products and services, such as Starbucks and McDonald's. Stability and consistency is an essential ingredient to keep people coming back.

Sixth, ***draw people into a perfect world*** and give them a feeling of actually shaping that world and making it real. The character Hello Kitty offers its fans a sense of stability and happiness. When McDonald's introduced a new Hello Kitty toy in Hong Kong, it sold out 4.5 million units in five weeks. When Makoto Bank in Taiwan launched Hello Kitty credit cards, its revenues skyrocketed. The success of such concepts lies in the ability to establish a framework of solid rules offering consumers safety, as well as freedom to reinvent themselves, in a world that's easier to control and understand than the real world.

Seventh, ***create sensory appeal***. Harley-Davidson is a prime example of a company that does this well. The signature sound of its V-twin engine forms the emotional and sensory bond of a true cult of consumers, who are not only willing to buy every Harley-Davidson product introduced but even to have the company's logo tattooed on their skin in some cases.

Eighth, ***harness the power of rituals***. Like every religion, every powerfully sensory product has rituals. Nintendo, X-Box, and PlayStation all have rituals in common. Serious gamers adhere to strict rituals set by the gaming community that cover everything from play patterns to cheat codes. Shared rituals can convert casual customers into a community of believers.

Ninth, ***create symbols for your brands***. All cultures are filled with symbols, yet only a limited number of brands have consistently integrated symbols into their overall communication efforts. For example Microsoft has changed its look more than once. Motorola has done the same. But what would McDonald's be without its arches? Symbols must consistently reflect a brand's core values and be so distinct that they are instantly recognizable.

Tenth, ***develop a sense of mystery***. Coca-Cola's secret formula, including an ingredient known as 7X, is one such mystery. In the entire history of the company, only eight people have ever known it, and only two are still alive. Or so the story goes. And it's a powerful story, nurtured by Coke. In 1977, when the Indian government demanded that the company reveal the formula, Coca-Cola's leaders said they would forgo the gigantic Indian market rather than surrender its secret. That's how powerful mystery can be to a brand.

These 10 rules address the fundamental components that underpin religion, and they can serve as the ultimate role model for branding.



BRANDING: A HOLISTIC VIEW

Branding is evolving. Over the next decade, the dialog will shift from better print campaigns and more catchy television commercials toward a path of reinvention. Brands will have to stand out, assert uniqueness, and establish identity as never before.

Traditional advertising channels will continue to hold true, but they will have to compete with nontraditional channels, which are growing as fast as technology permits. Airwaves and cyberways are gridlocked with so many messages that it's hard to find a unique voice.

In this frantic atmosphere, short-term economic performance still remains paramount. With this intense focus on ROI dominating every marketing move, it becomes harder to justify direct mail campaigns, especially when only 1.61 percent of people respond at all. And according to the Direct Marketing Association, less than 0.27 percent were responding to television commercials as of 2003.

A decade ago, direct mail and TV were 10 times more effective. Marketing departments are reaching the point where they're simply not willing to pay for results like that anymore.

One of the reasons for this state of affairs is that we live in a completely different world from the one for which traditional advertising was invented 50 years ago. Back then, we had perhaps three major communication channels: radio, TV, and print. Today we can't even count them all. Internet, cell phones, Blackberries, CDs, DVDs, electronic games — the channels are exploding too fast to keep track.

What this is doing is creating the age of the interactive consumer. Already an entire generation has grown up with a mouse in their hands and a computer screen as their window on the world. They demand a snappier, shorter, quicker, and more direct form of communication.

As result, over the next decade, sensory branding will be adopted by three categories of industries:

- First, the *sensory pioneers* will lead the way. These will include auto manufacturers and pharmaceutical companies. Trademarking components that build loyalty and overcome expiring patents will be the main drivers.
- Next, the *sensory adopters* will follow. These will include telecommunications and computer industry players, who are already fighting for definition and differentiation in what has become a commodity-driven business. They will take their inspiration from the auto makers and the entertainment sector.
- Last, the *sensory followers* will finally adopt sensory branding. This category will include a broad collection of industries, including fast moving consumer goods, retail, and entertainment. These industries often work with smaller budgets, have smaller margins, and face a less competitive picture than the sensory adopters.

Among the ***sensory pioneers***, the pharmaceutical industry players stand out because the patents on their products last only a limited number of years. Once that protection is gone, their product is fair game for anyone to copy — and there's no doubt that all successful drugs will be copied. A steady stream of generic drugs flows out of Asia. However, marketing departments will find that sensory branding will provide a solid base from which to create a platform for the next generation of points of differentiation.

Pfizer's little blue diamond-shaped pill, Viagra, is a perfect example of how a sensory experience can establish a drug and create a loyal, life-long following that no generic can unseat from its leadership position. By leveraging the visual components of the tablet, Pfizer has helped Viagra secure trademarked brand loyalty well beyond the time when its patent expires.

The automobile industry, too, has been leading the way in sensory branding. Car makers are working on new sounds for seat adjustments, gear boxes, hazard warnings, horns, and electric windows. Every component of the car represents a possible sensory touch point. Soon every car will have its own branded smell, tactile feel, and sound. Then the company can extend those experiences to other products. Porsche already sells everything from umbrellas to glasses. And Porsche customers willingly pay 40 percent more for a laptop than any other brand.

The ***sensory adopters*** will quickly follow those early leads. This is already beginning to play out in the telecommunications industry. Asian manufacturers are poised to bring high-standard, multi-sensory experiences to their products. Every aspect of the phone, from the tactile qualities to branded sounds and even the smell, will be enhanced and improved in the next few years. These sensory touch points will move across platforms as computers and PDAs further integrate with cell phones to create a seamless web of sensory experiences. A company called Immersion is even looking into the possibility of allowing consumers to “touch” someone over the phone.

Computer makers are now adopting the sound quality research of auto makers and integrating it into their products. Apple and Bang & Olufsen are the leaders in this area. Their first step in sensory branding, of course, was a passionate emphasis on design. Now they're focusing on sound. Soon they'll tackle touch and even smell in the same way that auto makers have done. A team of experts, including a psychologist, is now developing a mouse for Sony that will deliver images, text, and animation directly to the fingertips. From there, the sky's the limit when it comes to sensory branding.

After the adopters come the ***sensory followers***, with the food industry in the forefront of this third wave. They will become intimately engaged in sensory branding, as they manipulate the smell and taste of a product, as well as the sound and feel of its packaging. They'll also design the sound the food makes when eaten. Color and flavor manipulations will create new palettes of sensory experience.

From that point, consumers will embrace sensory branding in everything from hair brushes to ballpoint pens in the fast-moving consumer goods category. Everyday items will become increasingly sophisticated visually. The next step will be to differentiate scent and sound. To survive in this new sensory-defined world, companies will have to take their cues from more advanced industries to keep a lead in their own.

Today, the world's top five sensory brands are Singapore Airlines, Apple Computer, Disney, Mercedes-Benz, and Marlboro. But even those companies have enormous room to grow

into sensory branding and to optimize the customer experience.

The brands at the bottom of the list for sensory branding include some very big names, such as Ford, IBM, Sony, and even McDonald's. Their untapped potential is enormous. This strategy offers virtually the only true potential for an upgrade of your brand today, securing new levels of differentiation that will be impossible for another brand to imitate.

Traditionally, brands were owned by the companies that invented them. In the future, brands will be increasingly owned by the consumer. The only way to bind that consumer to your brand will be to inspire an emotional commitment — and the only way to do that will be by creating a sensory branding experience.



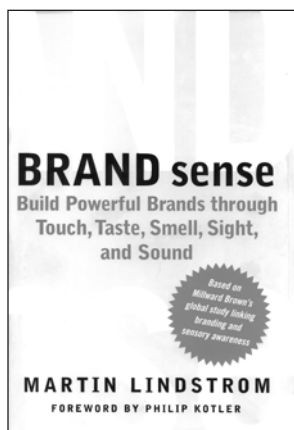
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Martin Lindstrom founded his own advertising agency at the age of twelve. Needless to say, his background is highly unusual. The rapid growth of his career has made him one of today's most respected branding gurus, recognized by the Chartered Institute of Marketing.

He sits on several boards globally, and his clients include Disney, Pepsi, Philips, Mars, Mercedes-Benz, Kellogg's, Microsoft, and Reuters, to name a few. Lindstrom is a former BBDO executive, global Chief Operating Officer of British Telecom/LookSmart, and founder and CEO of BBDO Interactive Europe and Asia Pacific. His books on branding, written with such industry icons as Don Peppers, Martha Rogers, and Patricia Seybold are sold worldwide and have been translated into more than 15 languages.



Lindstrom rejects the old rules of marketing that conceptualized branding as an art form composed of vague commercials and awareness messages. Instead his unique vision is scientific and process-based. It makes branding the driver of sales and profits, and consequently the centerpiece of business.



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