

## CHAPTER 2

# Some Companies Are Doing It Right

**THERE CAN BE NO DOUBT THAT** the effects of branding campaigns are on a steady decline as the cost of reaching consumers in an ever-busier world is on the rise. Household television viewing is increasingly the domain of children. In the United States, the average child is exposed to more than 30,000 television commercials a year, while adults see 86,500.<sup>1</sup> Today's sixty-five-year-old American has on an average watched more than 2 million commercials throughout life—equal to watching TV commercials every day eight hours a day, seven days a week without any break for close to six years.<sup>2</sup>

Given these television-viewing facts, it is not surprising that \$244 billion was spent on all advertising in 2003. It is a frenzied world indeed. Every year several thousand new brands appear on store shelves and need to be introduced to consumers. Marketers are facing ever new challenges to whip up the necessary attention required to build these brands. By 2007, 20 percent of U.S. households will have access to systems like TiVo that enable viewers to skip television ads altogether.<sup>3</sup> According to Nielsen Research, the number of

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men between ages eighteen and thirty-four watching prime-time television has declined by 5 percent. Furthermore, in 2003, 69 percent of U.S. magazines experienced falling circulation figures.<sup>4</sup>

Yet despite the decline in effectiveness, advertising is here to stay. Perhaps the way we communicate our messages needs to be reevaluated to be more closely aligned with today's world. Something new is required to break the two-dimensional advertising impasse. Superb picture quality won't do it. Nor will snazzier graphics. Increasingly, creative ideas set to digital sound aren't the answer either. Incremental improvements have been made in some areas, such as creating ads that mirror the theme of a program, and these to some degree help to keep viewers watching. But no matter what we do, advertising remains a mere flash in the daily life of the consumer.

Suppose we broadened our horizons to encompass as many senses as possible in our messages. Would it work? Skeptics correctly point out that transmitting smell through television is simply a physical impossibility. I would suggest that even though a brand cannot impart an aroma via a television set, there's nothing stopping an aroma from being fully integrated within the brand.

### *Sniffing an Opportunity . . . ?*

You sniff the milk you take from the refrigerator before drinking it; you sniff at the slightest indication of smoke, and then you act accordingly. Our sense of smell keeps us safe by helping us choose fresh and avoid rotten food. Each piece of fruit and cut of meat that finds its way into our shopping cart has passed the sniff-and-feel test, even through its plastic wrap. Instinctively we check for suspicious tears in the packaging and we wait subconsciously for the clicking of the seal when we open a soda or a can of peanuts.

Our senses are more attuned to danger detection than expectations of sensory delight. However, over the past century the advertising world has indulged and catered to our sense of sight in ensuring optimal visual satisfaction. We've become visually sophisticated, and we know that what we see is not always what we get. Be that as it

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may, the packaging of a product still carries the major load in attracting attention.

If there is a sound, touch, taste, or smell component, well, you'd probably be right in assuming that this is merely a pleasant coincidence. One may ask why these four senses have been neglected and left to their natural protective roles. I cannot think of a single reason!

Almost our entire understanding of the world is experienced through our senses. Our senses are our link to memory and can tap right into emotion. A bright fresh spring day has a particular smell to it. Manufacturers try to bottle this feeling of life's renewal. Then the marketers use the emotional connection to spring to sell their dish-washing liquids, toilet cleaners, shampoos, soaps, window cleaners and, well, you name it.

Bringing on the five senses has worked very well in emotionally connecting people to the rituals of faith. Candles flicker, the incense wafts, the choir strikes up rousing anthems of devotion, there's pageantry, elaborate costumes, and foods for special occasions. Even the sixth sense—the intuitive perception beyond the five senses—is given a special place in the pantheon of world religions.

We store our values, feelings, and emotions in memory banks. Compare that memory to the standard video recorder which records on two separate tracks—one for image, one for sound. The human being has at least five tracks—image, sound, smell, taste, and touch. These five tracks contain more data than one can imagine because they have direct bearing on our emotions and all that they entail. They can fast forward or backtrack at will, and stop just exactly on the right spot in a split second.

Just recently I was walking down a Tokyo street and brushed past someone wearing a distinct perfume. And whoosh! A Pandora's box of memories and emotions immediately spilled open. That whiff took me back fifteen years to my high school days, when a friend wore the exact same perfume. For a brief moment Tokyo didn't exist, and I was back in Denmark, flooded by a warmth of the familiar, and the happy, sad, and fearful times of a high-school boy.

Our memory library begins accumulating material from birth. But this is fluid and flexible, constantly open to redefinition and reinterpretation. When the famous Russian physiologist Ivan Pavlov

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introduced his famous experiment in 1899, he showed how a dog learns to anticipate food by the sound of a bell. This reflexive behavior extends to humans.

Take the simple example of a bedside alarm. As it signals its wake-up call every morning, you may come to anticipate its sound with foreboding. If, by chance, you hear the exact sound in the middle of the day, it would not be surprising to experience that same sense of foreboding suddenly upon you.

Events, moods, feelings, and even products in our lives are continuously imprinted on our five-track sensory recorder from the second we wake to the moment we sleep. This despite the fact that most mass communication—including advertising messages—that we're exposed on a daily basis comes to us on two of the five available tracks. They're visual and they have sound. We are so used to it, we never give it much thought. Herein lies the anomaly. As human beings, we're at our most effective and receptive when operating on all five tracks, yet not many advertising campaigns, communication plans, or brand-building exercises utilize much more than sight and sound to put their message across.

Do you remember when you bought your first new car? It had a definite new-car smell. Many people cite the new-car smell as being one of the most gratifying aspects of purchasing a new car. The smell is as much a statement of newness as the shiny body.

In fact there is no such thing as a new-car smell. It's an artificial construct, a successful marketing ploy that taps directly into fantasy. This smell can be found in aerosol canisters on the factory floor that contain that "new-car" aroma. As the car leaves the production line, the scent is sprayed throughout its interior. All in all it lasts about six weeks, and then is overtaken by the rough and tumble of dirty track shoes, old magazines, and the empty coffee cup you drank from on your way to work.

Ironically, neither the odometer nor your efforts at extreme tidiness can define when your car is no longer "new"—it's the disappearance of that new-car smell that creates the demarcation between a new and an ordinary everyday item. Of course you can prolong the sense of newness by stepping into your local car accessory store and buying a can of the new-car smell yourself!

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We are surprisingly unaware of the way our senses interact with our day-to-day experience. Bondi Beach in Sydney is fringed with stores all selling the usual summertime equipment. Umbrellas, sarongs, boogie boards, sun creams, and sodas. On a cold winter's day, when a rough southerly was blowing, a friend of mine needing to buy a last-minute birthday present popped into one of these stores to peruse the jewelry. She suddenly found herself browsing the rack of swimsuits. Surprised by her own behavior, she slowly became aware that the air seemed filled with summer even though the swimming season was a good five months away. She jokingly asked the sales staff to reveal their unseasonable secrets. Taking her into their confidence, they led her to the corner of the store, where a concealed machine consistently pumped out the subtle smell of coconuts. She didn't buy the swimsuit, but a week later she booked a trip to Fiji!

The power of suggestion can be found everywhere. Rice Krispies that don't snap, crackle, and pop are quite simply considered to be stale, even though the taste has not changed and they may still be perfectly good to eat. As for cornflakes, Kellogg's considers the crunchiness of the grain as having *everything* to do with the success of the breakfast product. Emphasis is placed on the crunch we hear and feel in our mouths rather than the sound effects we hear on commercials.

Kellogg's has spent years experimenting with the synergy between crunch and taste. As part of this research they made contact with a Danish commercial music laboratory that specializes in the exact crunchy sensation of a breakfast cereal. Kellogg's wanted to patent their own crunch, and trademark and own it in the same way they own their recipe and logo. So the laboratory created a highly distinctive crunch uniquely designed for Kellogg's, with only one very important difference from traditional music in commercials. The particular sound and feel of the crunch was identifiably Kellogg's, and anyone who happened to help himself to some cornflakes from a glass bowl at a breakfast buffet would be able to recognize those anonymous cornflakes as Kellogg's.

The day Kellogg's introduced their unique crunch to the market, their brand moved up the ladder. They'd expanded the perception of their brand to incorporate four senses (including touch) rather than

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the more limited sight and taste. So by appealing to another of our five senses they broadened their brand platform.

Expanding your brand platform to appeal to as many senses as possible makes sense. Think of walking past a bakery where you can smell the aroma of the warm bread, without stopping. It's extremely difficult. In the supermarkets of Northern Europe freshly baked bread is prominently displayed near the entry to the store. Although there's no immediate evidence of a bakery, if you look carefully at the ceiling, you will spot vents that are specially designed to disperse baking aromas. It has proved a profitable exercise in increasing sales—not only of baked goods, but across many product lines.

What aroma do you most associate with cinemas? I doubt that it's the smell of celluloid or other people. Chances are you're thinking of popcorn. In fact, the smell of popping corn has become so strongly linked with going to the movies that if it wasn't there you would more than likely feel an unidentifiable absence.

The unique aroma of popcorn, the texture and sound of crunching cornflakes, or the distinctive smell of a new car has very little to do with the actual product, or for that matter its performance. Yet these components have come to play an almost fundamental role in our relationship with these products. These forms of sensory stimulation not only make us behave in irrational ways, but also help us distinguish one product from the next. They've embedded themselves in our long-term memory and have become part of our decision-making processes.

It is these very processes that point the way toward the next generation of brand building. Over the next decade we will witness seismic shifts in the way we perceive brands. It can be compared to moving from black and white or color television with mono sound to high-definition color screens installed with surround sound.

Look at the page you're now reading. All you see are black letters printed on a white page. That's all I have at my disposal to convince you of a world that can be enhanced not just by vision, but by every other sense as well. Imagine a world devoid of color where everything we see is in black and white. Then try to explain the color red to a person who has only black-and-white vision. It's an enormous challenge, and one no different from the challenge facing brands, because

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ultimately they will have to move from the safety of their two-dimensional track and contemplate how to navigate in a world of color. It's a giant step for the advertising world, but an essential leap if they are going to be players in this new arena of sensory experience

The game has already begun. In fact, as far back as 1973 Singapore Airlines broke through the barriers of traditional branding with their Singapore Girl, a move that would prove so successful that in 1994 the Singapore Girl celebrated her twenty-first birthday and became the first brand figure to be displayed at the famous Madame Tussaud's Museum in London. Previously airlines had based their promotions on cabin design, food, comfort, and pricing—ignoring the total sensory experience they could offer. Singapore Airlines made the shift when they introduced a campaign based exclusively on the emotional experience of air travel.

With a brand platform emphasizing smoothness and relaxation, their strategy was to move away from portraying themselves simply as an airline and instead to present themselves as an entertainment company. In the process, a new set of brand tools were invented and introduced. The staff uniforms were made from the finest silk in a fabric design based on the patterns in the cabin décor. The staff was styled right down to their makeup. Flight attendants were offered only two choices of color combination based on a palette designed to blend with Singapore Airlines' brand color scheme.

The Singapore Girl was turned into an icon. The selection criteria for staff are inflexibly stringent. Cabin crew members have to be under twenty-six years of age, and the first hurdle a woman faces is fitting her body perfectly into the one-size uniform. Her beauty has to compare to the models used in the enticing ads. Above and beyond the usual training for flight attendants, she not only has to look the brand, but she has to act the brand as well. This includes strict instructions on how to speak to passengers, how to move in the cabin, and how to serve food.

Politically incorrect as this may appear in some countries, Singapore Airlines was clearly driven by an aim to establish a true sensory brand experience encompassing so much more than what the passengers could see and hear. Even the announcements from the captain were carefully scripted by the advertising agency.

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The sensory branding of the Singapore Girl reached its zenith by the end of the 1990s, when Singapore Airlines introduced Stefan Floridian Waters. Not your average household name, to be sure, Stefan Floridian Waters is an aroma that has been specifically designed as part of the Singapore Airlines experience. Stefan Floridian Waters formed the scent in the flight attendants' perfume, was blended into the hot towels served before takeoff, and generally permeated the entire fleet of Singapore Airlines planes. The patented aroma has since become a unique trademark of Singapore Airlines.

Of course it is often difficult to identify a particular odor, and even more difficult to describe it in words. Those who recall the unique smell of the airline cabin describe it as smooth, exotically Asian, and distinctly feminine. If you were to ask travelers who take a subsequent journey with Singapore Airlines about this unique scent, they all report instant recognition upon stepping into the aircraft. It's a smell that has the potential to kick-start a kaleidoscope of smooth comfortable memories—all reflecting the Singapore Airlines brand.

## ***Brand Bland***

It was less than fifty years ago when the first documented evidence on the positive effects of branding appeared. During the late 1950s it appeared that consumers were prepared to pay more for branded products—even if the nonbranded item was of the same quality, appearance, and taste. Most, if not all, of the knowledge we have today about branding has its roots in the 1950s and 1960s.

The intense focus on building a brand around its “personality,” namely, giving the brand values and feelings in order to distinguish it from the next, evolved in the 1970s and 1980s. There have been no earth-shattering changes in our perception of brands in all this time. Even the World Wide Web, an interactive medium, still primarily contains banner ads as its primary advertising tool—despite the fact that those ads lack a true interactive foundation.

There is no doubt that the marketing community is technologi-

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cally and creatively smarter in the execution of television commercials, print ads, billboards, and radio promotions than in past years. But as we have previously observed, all the communication techniques used today have one thing in common: they're all based on two senses—sight and sound. This flies in the face of the fact that human beings have three more senses that can be addressed. Furthermore, research shows just what a large role our olfactory capabilities play in our decisions.

***Do You Hear Me, Hear Me, Hear Me . . .***

Repetition has been one of the most prominent techniques used by advertisers to ensure a message is understood and remembered by the consumer. A classic television campaign will be seen or heard by the consumer, on average, three times. This applies across the board, no matter where the consumer has access to commercial television. In a fact that barely needs remarking upon, the more often a message is repeated, the better it is remembered. As is the brand.

There clearly is a limit to just how many times we can repeat what we do. To what extent can we saturate the airwaves with messages and still expect people to pay attention? Watch any news station and the screen is packed with news bars, stock ratings, breaking-news updates, as well as the TV presenter—and all this happens at the same time on one screen.

The reality is that people are spending less time in front of television, less time reading magazines, and less time listening to the radio. Even so, over the past five years, advertising spending has increased on average by 8 percent annually.<sup>5</sup> By the same token, the average consumer is exposed to 9 percent more commercial messages each year.<sup>6</sup> In 1965 the average consumer remembered 34 percent of the ads shown on TV. In 1990 he remembered only 8 percent.<sup>7</sup> More and more money is being spent executing increasingly less effective brand campaigns. In short, advertising has hit a brick wall.

**BRAND sense***Replacing Repetition with Sensory Synergy*

Let's look at movies as an example. Remove the dialogue, the sound effects, and the music and I'm sure you'd agree that we're not left with much that entertains us. Conversely, remove the images and listen to the soundtrack. Again, hardly stuff that will keep us enthralled. The value of movie entertainment is the combination of audio and video working together. Only then do we have cinematic magic. Magic enough to make a  $2 + 2 = 5$  equation work!

To some extent we have reached a level where we can say that the positive synergy is effective just by forming this equation. But at what point is this enough? Would it be true to say that if we were able to combine this workable synergy with taste, touch, and smell we'd add another hugely substantial dimension? Could the formula be as simple as: sound + vision + touch + smell + taste equals  $2 + 2 + 2 + 2 + 2 = 20$ ? Would we then discover a positive synergy across and between each of our five senses? Is it the case that delicious-smelling food tastes better? Or a heavier mobile phone implies a better quality? Perhaps perfume smells better if it is presented in a stylish bottle? Will a brand have more value if it imparts a sense of smell, touch, and taste in addition to the audio and visual aspect?

There may be something to it. New York-based *Condé Nast Traveler* magazine has named Singapore Airlines the best airline. And almost every other independent study has concurred: Singapore Airlines leads the way. This despite the fact that their food is average and their leg room is no better than many of the other airlines that rank in the top twenty.

To what extent can we regard the increased sales in a supermarket pumping the smell of freshly baked bread through their aisles as coincidence? How can we explain why the crispiness of our breakfast cereal makes it taste fresher and better?

By the end of the 1990s Daimler Chrysler established an entirely new department within the company. This was not to design, build, or even market cars. Its job was solely to work on the sound of their car doors. That's it. With a team of ten engineers allocated to the

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task, their only role was to analyze and then create the perfect sound of an opening and closing door.

Over the years, car manufacturers have learned a lot about what sells cars. And it's not what we think it is. It's not necessarily the car's design or even the acceleration. Studies show that the interior design—including the way the doors open and close—helps determine the choice. The interior design is extremely important because generally women relate more to the feel of the interior than they do to the features outside. So the way the doors close can be an important factor in the perception of quality. Daimler Chrysler understands this.

The days when people could discuss the true value of brand building are long gone. Models have been established, proven, and enhanced a million times over. We have now reached a point where another dimension to building brands needs to be added. This will help ensure that branding won't be killed by its own success.

### *The Five-Dimensional (5-D) Brand*

Try this exercise. Draw a sensory model (a sensogram) of your brand, and then describe its appeal in both visual and audio terms. Although this will by its very nature be a fairly subjective assessment, I suggest that you approach it using the following criteria:

- How clear is the image?
- How distinct is the image?
- Do consumers perceive the image of your brand consistently?
- Is the image a memorable one?

#### **Sight**

Sight is the most seductive sense of all. It often overrules the other senses, and has the power to persuade us against all logic. Consider the food and color test that Dr. H. A. Roth performed in 1988. He colored a lemon-and-lime flavored drink in various degrees of inten-

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sity. He then asked hundreds of students to say which was the sweeter. Most got it wrong. They believed that the stronger the color, the sweeter the drink. But in fact it was quite the opposite: the stronger the color, the more sour it actually was!<sup>8</sup>

In another test, C. N. DuBose asked the subjects to taste grape, lemon-lime, cherry, and orange drinks. There was no trouble correctly identifying the flavor if the color matched. But when color and flavor were switched, only 30 percent of those who tasted the cherry could identify the flavor. In fact, 40 percent thought the cherry drink was lemon-lime.<sup>9</sup>

Vision is all about light. As early as the fifth century BC the Greeks recognized the link between the eye and the objects seen. By the fourth century BC Aristotle rejected the idea that a visual fire emanated from the eye, reasoning that if vision were produced by fire in the eye, we would see in the dark. The difference between our day and night vision is that our night vision is color-blind.

One of the most important art movements in history occurred when a collection of artists in nineteenth-century France began to study the effects of light. They became known as the Impressionists, and their work is essentially a study of the effects of changing light on any given object. They took their oils and their easels outdoors and painted haystacks and water lilies and the like, over and over again, recording different times of day as well as different seasons. To truly see what an artist saw when painting a given picture, you should look at it under the same light.

Within the range of visible light, different wavelengths appear to us as different colors—therefore most colors that we see are composed of a range of wavelengths. It is not surprising that the eye has been understood to work like a camera—its function is to send a perfect image to the brain. This misperception is so widespread that it even has a name. It's called the homunculus fallacy (homunculus is Greek for "little man"). The fallacy is the idea that when we see something, a small representation of it is transmitted to the brain to be looked at by a little man.

The function of the visual system is to process light patterns into information useful to the organism. We have surprisingly low visual acuity (resolution) in parts of the visual field that are not at the center

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of where we are looking—the center of gaze. We are not aware of this, because we usually move our center of gaze to whatever we want to look at.

Light passes through the pupil, and the lens focuses the image on the retina, a sheet of layers of neural tissue that lines the back of the eyeball.

There are photoreceptors in the first layers of the retina which have light-absorbing chemicals. The signals pass through the first layer to the ganglion cells, which send their signal from the eye via the optic nerve to the brain. This then translates into what we see.

And we all see differently. Half-full or half-empty. You say orange, I say vermilion. Sight, one might say, is truly in the eye of the beholder—which is why companies like the renowned authority Pantone specialize in developing tools to help designers communicate colors.

**THE VISUAL BRAND** Let's examine the Coca-Cola brand visually. It has a very clear sense of color. Quite simply, wherever there's Coke, there's red and white. Coca-Cola takes its colors extremely seriously. Santa Claus traditionally wore green until Coca-Cola began to promote him heavily in the 1950s. Now in every shopping mall across the western world, Santa wears the colors of Coke. The consistent use of the colors, the dynamic ribbon, the typography, and the logo have established a very clear and unambiguous image which has survived for decades and is memorable to anyone who has been exposed to the brand. It's a brand that will, without a moment's hesitation, earn full marks for its visuals.

### Sound

I have a memory from when I was a child. We were asked to sit silently in a circle on the floor and do nothing but listen for two minutes. There were no eventful sounds, mostly silence. Yet when asked, we all could recall hearing something. And each of us heard something different. For some it was a cough, for others it was a footstep, or a door slamming. Traffic. Leaves rustling. I heard a clock ticking.

Children have more acute hearing than adults. They can recognize a wider variety of noises—and memorize these more easily. As

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we grow older we lose our sensitivity, unless of course we constantly exercise our listening faculties. But even the most sensitive human ear is not as finely tuned as a dolphin's. Dolphins' hearing is fourteen times better than humans.

As smell is connected to memory, so sound is connected to mood. Sound does in fact generate mood. It creates feelings and emotions. A love movie isn't nearly as emotional if you watch with the sound off. Sound can inspire joy and sadness in equal measure.

Like our other sense organs, our ears are extremely well designed. They serve two very important purposes. Besides hearing sounds, our ears maintain our balance.

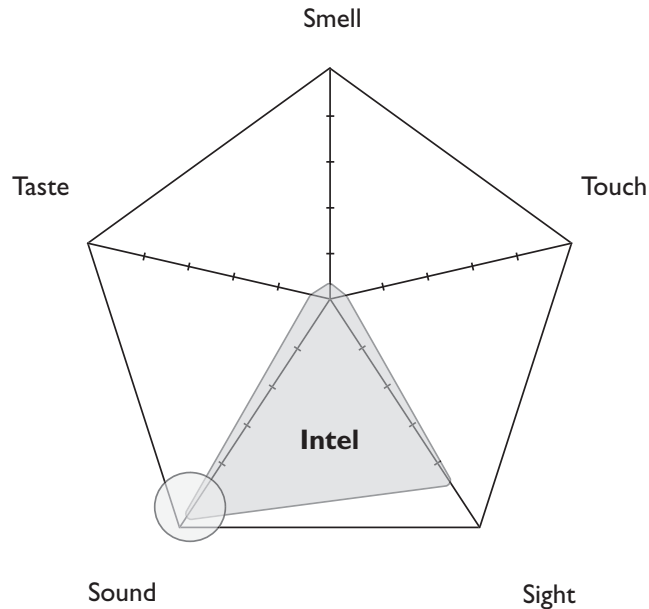
Sound originates from the motion or vibration of an object—just like the vibrations of a drum. This motion sends vibrations or sound waves through the air, in the same way that ripples form on a pond. The outer ear funnels these vibrations into the ear canal, where they move by a process similar to Morse code until they hit the eardrum. This sets off a chain of vibrations. The eardrum vibrates against the three smallest bones in the body, moving the sound through an oval window into the labyrinth, a maze of winding passages. At the front of the labyrinth is a coiled tube resembling a snail's shell. Here the 25,000 receptors pick up the signals and send them to the brain, and so we hear. Balance is controlled at the end of the labyrinth.

It appears that loss of hearing is worse than loss than the loss of sight. For example, in a letter she wrote in 1910 Helen Keller said, "The problems of deafness are deeper and more complex, if not more important, than those of blindness. Deafness is a much worse misfortune. For it means the loss of the most vital stimulus—the sound of the voice that brings language, sets thoughts astir and keeps us in the intellectual company of man."<sup>10</sup>

**BRAND SOUND** The second dimension that is heavily leveraged in today's brand-building process is the use of audio. Despite the fact that audio technology has been available for over a hundred years, the use of audio has not been perfected nearly to the degree of its visual counterpart.

Using the same criteria we applied to a brand's visuals, Intel stands out as the company with the clearest, most distinct, consis-

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**FIGURE 2.1** A brand like Intel manages to score highly on sound even though the brand's core offering has nothing to do with audio. The criterion for achieving a perfect score is to have a distinct and memorable sound.

tent, and memorable use of sound. The Intel Inside tune has been around since 1998, making the invisible (the chip) visible via the short, distinct sound used throughout all of Intel's advertising and brand-building campaigns. Research shows that the Intel jingle, also known as the wave, is as distinct and memorable as the Intel logo. In fact, studies have shown that in many cases people remember the Intel wave better than the logo.

*That's It . . . At Least According  
to Conventional Wisdom*

Up until now, that would be it for building a brand. Perfect visuals. Perfect audio. This is where the brand-building process traditionally

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stops. It stops despite the fact that a total sensory experience would at least double, if not triple, the consumer's ability to memorize the brand.

If you decided to examine any of today's Fortune 500 brands, you would quickly realize that decades concentrating on the audiovisual dimensions has narrowed the focus to only these two dimensions, neglecting the other senses as if they do not exist. I'd even go so far as to say that the perfect utilization of audio has not yet been achieved.

So many brands focus their energies on strong visuals, often to the detriment of the audio component. Visit the Internet sites of the world's Fortune 500 brands, and you will quickly come to realize that only 4 percent use sound as an integrated element online. Furthermore, only 9 percent of all brands utilize the strengths of audio in making their brand more distinct, clearer, consistent, and memorable across a majority of their channels.

Consider this. When you open a bottle or can of soda, there's a distinct sound. No one has thought to brand this. Then there's Microsoft's start-up notes. Yet Microsoft changes them each time they release a new version of their operating system. One wonders why Porsche hasn't branded a new-Porsche smell. Why doesn't Motorola have a Motorola ringing tone? After all, 15 percent of the world's mobile phone users listen to their Motorola phone ringing approximately nine times a day.

Jean-Martin Folz, the chairman of the French car manufacturing giant PSA Peugeot Citroën, decided to adopt a sensory branding strategy to create a group identity around the two very distinct brands. At the same time that the company created a corporate identity, the group developed a sound identity. Interestingly, this sound identity was used internally, rather than for commercial purposes. Each morning, when 65,000 employees turn on their computers, they are greeted by the group's signature tune rather than Microsoft's start-up notes. The PSA group's tune was also applied to their telephone "hold" music. It went further. When Folz gave a speech about the group's strategy at the 2003 Paris auto show, the music was played as an introduction, before he took to the stage.

**MARTIN LINDSTROM****Smell**

You can close your eyes, cover your ears, refrain from touch, and reject taste, but smell is part of the air we breathe. It's the one sense you can't turn off. We smell with every breath we take, and that's around 20,000 times a day. It is also the sense we most take for granted. There's no cultural activity that caters to it—no sniffing galleries, no concertos written to surround us with odor, no special menu of smells created for grand occasions, and yet . . . it is the most direct and basic sense.

Observe an animal in a new place. The very first thing it does is sniff around. Odors give them most of the information they need to gauge their potential safety. Smell is also extraordinarily powerful in evoking memory. Where you may be at a loss to conjure up the details of your childhood home, a whiff of homemade bread can instantly transport you back in time. As Diane Ackerman says in her poetic study *A Natural History of the Senses*, "Hit a tripwire of smell, and memories explode all at once. A complex vision leaps out of the undergrowth."<sup>11</sup>

No one has managed to describe the nose more elegantly than Lyall Watson. In *Jacobson's Organ*, his comprehensive and idiosyncratic study of smell, he refers to smell as a "chemical sense." He goes on to explain, "Receptor cells in the nose translate chemical information into electrical signals. These travel along olfactory nerves into the cranial cavity, where they gather in the olfactory bulbs. These, in turn, feed the cerebral cortex, where association takes place and nameless signals become transformed into the fragrance of a favorite rose or the musky warning of an irritable skunk."<sup>12</sup>

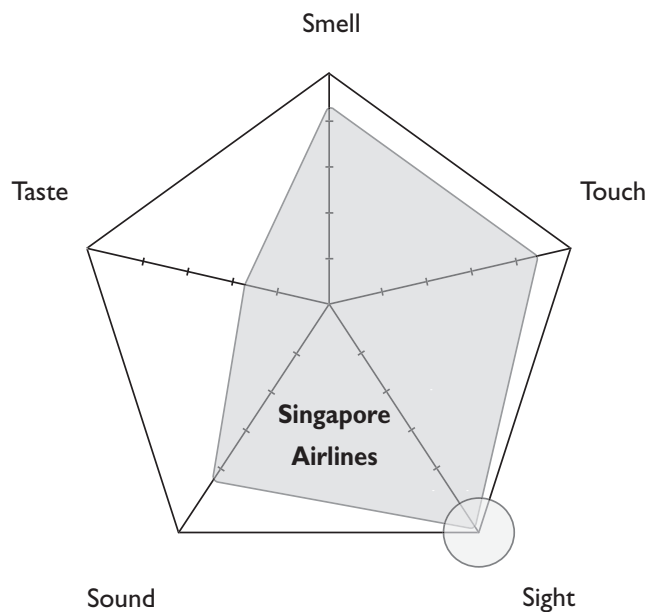
Smell is almost impossible to describe. We are exposed to thousands of different smells yet we have an extremely limited vocabulary to address them. Watson points out how scant the vocabulary for auxiliary odors (such as the way a home or a cupboard might smell) is in every culture. "In Central Africa alone, auxiliary odors are described as phosphoric, cheesy, nutty, garlicky, rancid, ammoniac and musky."<sup>13</sup> We often "borrow" from the wider vocabulary of food and taste to describe a scent.

How we perceive body odor is culturally determined. Some Mex-

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icans still believe that the smell of a man's breath is more responsible for conception than his semen is. In Japan, 90 percent of the population has no detectable underarm odor, and young men who are unfortunate enough to belong to the smelly minority can be disqualified from military service on that ground alone. Napoleon had no such problem. He wrote to Josephine, "I will be arriving in Paris tomorrow evening. Don't wash."<sup>14</sup> George Orwell did not share Napoleon's passion, and writing almost a century later, stated that "The real secret of class distinction in the West can be summed up in four frightful words . . . *the lower classes smell.*"<sup>15</sup>

Smell has played its part in war. Jack Holly, a U.S. Marine who led patrols in Vietnam, says, "I am alive because of my nose. You couldn't see a camo bunker if it was right in front of you. But you can't camouflage smell. I could smell the North Vietnamese before hearing or seeing them. Their smell was not like ours, not Filipino, not South Vietnamese, either. If I smelled that again, I would know it."<sup>16</sup>



**FIGURE 2.2** Singapore Airlines scores high on the smell dimension in comparison with any other airline brand.

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**THE BRAND SMELL** If you agree with me this far, I'm sure you'll be even more surprised to learn how few brands have established a distinct aroma; in fact, less than 3 percent in the Fortune 1000 list have even given it a thought.

But just as your brand's sight and sound need to be clear and distinct, so does its smell. All it needs to be is a subtle scent that in some cases is so fully integrated with the brand that you'd hardly notice it.

### Touch

Touch is the tool of connection for those who have the misfortune to be both blind and deaf. When all else fails, the skin can come to the rescue. Such was the experience of Helen Keller, who became deaf and blind through illness at age two. The unruly child was dragged to the water pump by her teacher, who held her hand under the stream while signing W-A-T-E-R into her palm. This marked the beginning of an arduous but rewarding journey that ultimately led to literacy and opened up a world of Braille and books that could be read by touch.

The skin is the largest organ of the body. Additionally the elements comprising the skin have a large representation in the cortex of the brain. We're instantly alert to cold, heat, pain, or pressure. It is estimated that there are 50 receptors per 100 square millimeters each containing 640,000 microreceptors dedicated to the senses. As we get older, these numbers decrease and we lose sensitivity in our hands. However, our need for touch does not diminish, and exists beyond detecting danger. We need the stimulus of touch to grow and thrive.

A series of experiments was undertaken at the University of Colorado School of Medicine by Dr. John Benjamin. Two groups of rats were given the same tools for survival—food and water, and a safe living space. The only difference was that the rats in one of the groups were stroked and caressed. The results were that the petted rats “learned faster and grew faster.”<sup>17</sup>

The word *touch* encompasses a world of meaning. We try to “stay in touch” with friends, and we “lose touch” with some. People are partial to the “personal touch” as an expression of a personal idiom.

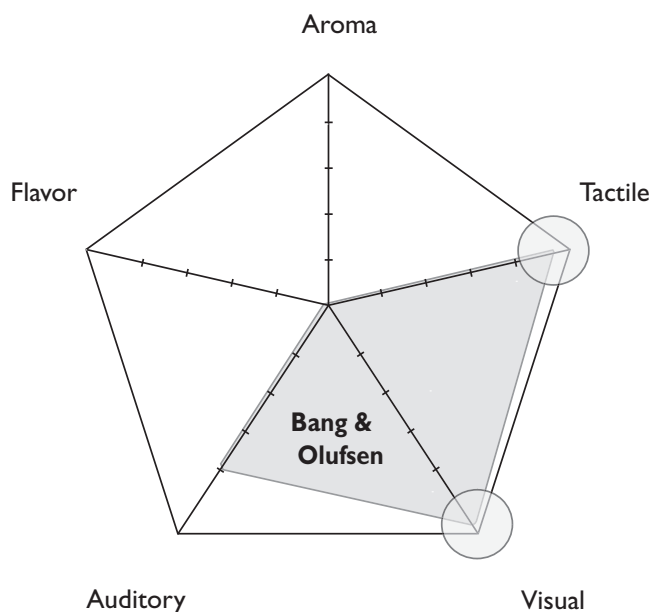
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We feel “touched” by gestures of care and concern, and express distaste by refusing to “touch it with a ten-foot pole.” We’re “touched” by madness or a bit of the sun. The list goes on.

Touch alerts us to our general well-being. Pain travels from skin to brain and triggers warning systems that demand attention. Those who feel no pain may sustain serious injury without being aware of danger. A therapeutic touch can also ease pain. Massage has long been a prescribed remedy for tense muscles and poor circulation in Asian countries and has more recently expanded to the West. Preachers lay hands on those who need to be healed. The Japanese have mastered shiatsu, a type of acupuncture using the fingers.

From the parent’s touch of a child to the sensual caress of lovers, touch is ultimately the true language of love.

**THE BRAND TOUCH** What’s the texture of your brand? For many companies this would not apply, but still close to 82 percent of all



**FIGURE 2.3** Bang & Olufsen scores high on touch. The tactile element has become one of the core brand elements differentiating B&O from its competitors.

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brands appearing on the Fortune 1000 list would be able to leverage this if they were made aware of it.

One of the most distinct brands that appeal to the tactile sense is the luxury electronics company Bang & Olufsen. Since their products first appeared in 1943, Bang & Olufsen have put as much detail into their design as they have into the quality of their sound. One of their many innovations has been the all-in-one remote control—enabling the user to use the same device for the television, the radio, the CD, the tape recorder, as well as the lighting in each room. This invention, which first appeared in 1985, has evolved to become a streamlined sensual piece of equipment that oozes quality. Other companies have introduced similar pieces of equipment, but the Bang & Olufsen remote is heavy, solid, and quite distinct. This sense of gravitas is duplicated across every Bang & Olufsen product line, from telephones to speakers, including earphones and the whole range of accessories.

### Taste

Taste is detected by special structures called taste buds. It is generally believed that girls are more sensitive to taste than boys. The belief is well founded because girls do in fact have more taste buds than boys. We have about 10,000 taste buds, mostly concentrated on the tongue, with some at the back of the throat and on the palate. Everyone tastes differently. As you get older, your sense of taste changes, and becomes less sensitive, making it more likely that you will enjoy foods that you considered “too strong” as a child.

There are four types of taste buds, sensitive to sweet, salty, sour, or bitter chemicals respectively. Different taste areas of the tongue are better than others at detecting certain flavors, because each type is concentrated in different regions of the tongue. The very tip is best at sweet things (noted in a child’s preference to lick a candy sucker rather than chew it), sour on the sides, bitter at the back, and saltiness all over. Taste is formed from the mixture of these basic elements. Different tastes are distinguished by various combinations and a more sophisticated sense of smell.

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I remember a school excursion to a large snack factory in Denmark. As we walked by the shaped corn rings, I snuck a few into my mouth. I expected that familiar cheesy flavor but was astounded when I tasted nothing. Absolutely nothing. All I experienced was a strange texture in my mouth. Then I discovered that the snack had yet to undergo a flavoring process before it was packaged. To this day I remember the awful blandness, and it has served to remind me of the importance of taste.

Those who cannot see are blind. Those who cannot hear, deaf. Those who cannot speak, mute. But those who cannot smell or taste are left hanging; they suffer from an absence without a name. Is “taste-blind” the condition that doesn’t warrant a term? Food is an integral part of life. Social interaction happens around the table, and food plays a vital role in tradition and ritual. You would still partake in the intimacy of sharing a meal, but the pleasure would be lessened.

The result of losing the sense of taste often generates deep depression. A friend of mine suffering from this phenomenon told me that she would live without any of her senses—but taste. Taste goes hand in hand with smell, and for those who cannot taste, all that is left of a gourmet meal is the texture and temperature of the food. Those who suffer such a loss say that it is like forgetting how to breathe. We take smell and taste for granted, unaware that everything around us has a smell—until, that is, nothing smells at all.

Taste and smell are closely related. It would not be incorrect to assume that one smells more flavors than they taste. When the nose fails, say from a bad cold, taste suffers an 80 percent loss. Loss of taste without loss of smell is pretty rare. Full sensory appreciation of food also involves its appearance, its consistency, and its temperature. The author of a respected British medical journal says that if doctors got closer to their patients, they could smell the ailment. He believes that certain illnesses produce certain odors: a patient who smells like whole-wheat bread may have typhoid, and an apple smell just may indicate gangrene.<sup>18</sup>

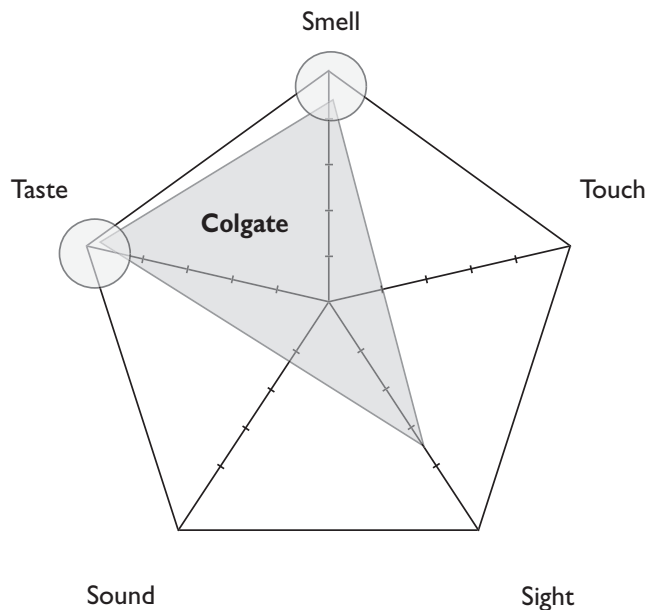
Most of the descriptive terms and phrases we have for smell are associated with food. Smell is estimated to be 10,000 times more sensitive than taste, making taste the weakest of our five senses.

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**THE BRAND TASTE** Apart from the food and beverage industry, taste is a tricky sense for most brands to incorporate. However, brands that can incorporate taste can clearly build a very strong brand platform. In fact, close to 16 percent of the Fortune 1000 brands could add taste to their brand platform, yet almost none have so much as given this a cursory glance.

Colgate is one of the exceptions. They've patented their distinct toothpaste taste. It's important to note that they have not to date extended this distinctive taste to their other products, like their toothbrushes or dental flosses. So although they've been totally consistent with establishing the Colgate "look" across their product lines, they've been inconsistent by not building their unique taste into products other than toothpaste.

Despite this lack of consistency, Colgate probably ranks as one of the best brands in applying a distinct taste to its product, although there still remains a fair bit of room to leverage taste as part of the brand's extension strategy.



**FIGURE 2.4** Despite its failure to leverage the taste across Colgate brand extensions, the Colgate taste surpasses most other brands that fall outside the food and beverage category.

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The taste of Colgate toothpaste, the well-designed Bang & Olufsen remote control, the Intel digital sound wave, and Coca-Cola's distinctive red and white have one thing in common: they've all created a third dimension to their product. Their strong sensory uniqueness is distinct enough for users to recognize without the usual logo or typography cues.

### *Introducing the Signature Brand*

Have you ever heard of a "signature dish"? The term is used by chefs when designing a specific dish which they hope to become known for. In time they may enhance it, add a little spice here, or an herb there, but it's the entrée with which they're associated.

This phenomenon is fascinating not only because it allows chefs to create their own niche in a highly competitive market, but also because it leads to other dishes related to the primary or "signature" dish. People will return to the restaurant because they know that everything on the menu will be in harmony with the signature dish. Everything about the surroundings will also play a role: The décor, the manner in which the food is presented, the plates, the feel of the cutlery, and the attitude of the staff. The reputation of the food is only part of the sensory package. What makes a dish truly memorable is the synergy that exists between the different elements of the whole sensory package. If the chef were appealing only to taste and aroma, it is doubtful if the restaurant would achieve the same results.

The effects of sensory branding are astounding. Yes, it's possible to create a truly spectacular commercial, or an impressive advertising jingle, but they begin to become effective only when the two elements are combined. The effect is magnified many times over when you include any of the other senses.

This total sensory synergy produces a domino effect. In the way impressions are stored in the brain, if you trigger one sense, it will

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lead to the another, and then another . . . a whole vista of memories and emotions can instantaneously unfold. Succeeding with two elements is only half a story; creating a synergy across the senses should be the ultimate goal.

***Moving Toward a Multisensory Model***

So the idea of sensory branding sounds good in theory? Well, practical steps need to be taken in order to move your brand from its two-dimensional world into a five-dimensional place. There are strategies to employ so that this transition will be successful. The creation of a sensory brand is a six-step process. Each step is designed so that you won't lose control of the brand. It will ensure that you don't misrepresent the brand, and most importantly you won't end up with a situation where the brand does not fulfill the promises it makes.

**Setting the Stage**

To develop a successful sensory branding strategy it is important not to plunge right in and start adjusting the sound, smell, and touch of your brand. Before a chef touches his ingredients, he needs a clear vision of the type of gastronomic journey he wants for his customers. When formulating a sensory branding strategy, one of the key criteria for success is to set the stage, which will allow you to carefully select the channels, the tools, and the senses you intend to tap into when building your future brand.

Setting the stage is an apt metaphor. Each element of your brand contributes to the entire show. The first questions we need to ask are what exactly we wish to create in our brand theater and what message we need to impart. It's essential to be perfectly clear about this core message before we can take the next step.

**Smashing Your Brand**

In 1915 a designer from the Root Glass Company of Terra Haute, Indiana was asked to design a glass bottle. The brief was pretty straightfor-

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ward: The bottle design should be so distinctive that if it were broken, the pieces would still be recognizable as part of the whole. He succeeded beyond his wildest dreams. The bottle he designed was the classic Coke bottle, which has become one of the most famous glass icons ever. The bottle is still in service, still recognizable, and has been passing the smash test for every generation over the last eighty years.

The Coke bottle story reveals a fascinating aspect from a brand-building perspective, because in theory all brands should be able to pass this sort of test. If you removed the logo from your brand, would it still be recognizable? Would the copy stand up to it? Would the colors, graphics, and images standing alone pass the test?

Can your brand survive being smashed? It is an interesting exercise that can remove a logo-fixated mind-set and bring you closer to a philosophy valuing all elements that create your brand. Two black ears from a well-known mouse are instantly recognizable as Disney. A Singapore Girl suggests Singapore Airlines. These are only components of the brand, and yet they're unmistakable. The trick is to create each element so that it's so strong, so able to stand alone, yet at the same time so integrated and synergistic that it can take the brand to a whole new level of familiarity.

### **Understanding the Brand Ingredients**

In order to successfully smash your brand, you need to have an intimate understanding of what it's actually made up of. What are the drivers behind the visual strategy? What is the theory behind the sound? What role does aroma play in the message? How can you convey its tactile sense on a television screen? How does it taste?

To go back to our chef analogy, we need to know the value of each ingredient. We need to know what works with what, and how to handle and prepare each ingredient in order to achieve the perfect mix and create the optimal synergy for our five senses.

### **Gathering the Pieces**

Once you've set the stage for your brand, and broken it down to its various parts, it's time to gather the pieces. In putting it together

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again, you will no doubt be much more familiar with the various parts. This familiarity will allow you to reconstruct your brand in such a way that each sensory component is enhanced and can stand alone.

### Releasing the Brand

So far the number of true sensory branding cases across the globe can be counted on one hand. Part of the *BRAND sense* project has been to explore the details of what makes a successful multisensory brand. Does a five-sense synergy really exist? What combinations of senses work best together? How do you transfer an emotion communicated by one sense to another ensuring a positive synergy? How do you measure the success of this approach?

The questions are endless, and with support from the global research institute Millward Brown, I've attempted to answer them. The *BRAND sense* project has primarily been concerned with finding the most effective ways to transform theory into a practical sensory branding approach.

### The Art of Selling Perception

Building brands requires building perception—nothing more, nothing less. Creating the perfect perception requires the perfect sensory appeal. The aim is to help you revitalize your brand by evaluating and optimizing every dimension that contributes to the perception of your brand. Each aspect of this journey will be examined in detail beginning with the next chapter, where I'll start by smashing your brand. By the end you will certainly be able to establish a totally new platform for your Brand 2.0.

### *Case Study: Navigating Uncharted Brand Channels*

Nokia currently boasts an astounding 40 percent *global* market share in mobile phones. This translates into 400 million people who use

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their Nokia phone on a daily basis. Besides the more obvious elements that characterize Nokia phones, their less obvious branding tools have created what Nokia has become today. According to the brand consultants Interbrand, Nokia is the world's eighth most valuable brand, and it is estimated to be worth \$29 billion.

### **Read Chinese with Nokia**

The sound language of Nokia is only part of their invincible brand story. Add their navigation and user interface and you realize just how conversant you've become with the Nokia brand.

A couple of months ago a friend of mine set out to fool me by changing the display language on my Nokia phone from English to Mandarin. At first I was taken by surprise when every icon on the screen was written in Chinese characters. However, my familiarity with the Nokia system was such that it was as if I could actually read Chinese. I intuitively found my way to the language function, where I could reprogram it back to English. The language of choice played almost no role in my ability to navigate. It was in fact the Nokia language, which seamlessly carried me across the cultural divide.

This is a situation that only a serious market leader can create. Nokia has established its position through consistent education of the consumer. Nokia users are thoroughly familiar with the interface. Any Nokia user can find the most vital functions on his cell phone without even looking. This, you may say, is more luck than calculated loyalty building. Not so. Think about it. How often have you been frustrated by a new video machine, microwave, or dishwasher? Even if you've purchased a familiar brand, the new operating system often proves so challenging that you are reluctant to even attempt it. The effort proves too demanding.

Habit plays a large part in generating brand loyalty. This is a fact that you may not even be aware of. One of the *BRAND sense* surveys asked respondents to choose between Nokia and Sony Ericsson phones. One respondent clearly admired the Sony Ericsson for its light weight and stylish features, but he chose Nokia because it simply felt easier to use. This despite the fact that the Sony Ericsson was cheaper, had more features, and was more stylish.

**MARTIN LINDSTROM****Nokia Knows that Laziness Builds Brands**

In contrast with almost every other cell phone manufacturer, Nokia has used its opportunity as market leader to introduce an almost invisible, yet branded, Nokia language. It's important to note that this language does not necessarily draw new users, but Nokia's penetration of the market via traditional advertising has accelerated and even secured new purchases. Somehow the company has managed to overcome substantial manufacturing mistakes over the years, including everything from unexpected user errors to faulty displays.

Still, Nokia users keep returning to the Nokia brand. They return because people like the familiar. They're reluctant to change because they're essentially lazy and don't want to put in the effort that's required to master a new operating system.

As Nokia market penetration increases, and Nokia customers repurchase the brand again and again, this creates an ever greater loyalty that no traditional brand campaign can create. With each repurchase the Nokia language becomes further embedded into the behavior of the customer. This is priceless. And it all comes at a minimal cost because the Nokia brand language is out there capturing the unsuspecting consumer each time a phone rings within earshot.

**True Brand Power!**

If you happen to be a Nokia phone owner, almost every element of the cell phone experience has turned into a branded Nokia experience. It's almost unnecessary for you to carry a phone charger because wherever you are, you're bound to find a Nokia charger that you can plug into—be it through a hotel or a friend. If you happen to own another brand of cell phone, you may not be quite so lucky. So something quite simple like the need to recharge has become part of Nokia's true brand power. A huge disadvantage for its current competitors.

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**Highlights**

We are all intimately familiar with our senses—if not always aware of them. They fully inform the picture of our daily life. When one of them is missing we realize how important it is.

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However, for some reason the advertising industry communicates almost exclusively in a 2-D world. The fact is that a majority of the five thousand commercial messages we all are exposed to each day are based on what we see and hear—but only rarely on what we smell, touch, and taste.

Brand communication has reached a new frontier. In order to successfully conquer future horizons, brands will have to find ways to break the 2-D impasse and appeal to the three neglected senses. Superb picture quality won't do it. Rather we should look to embrace all five senses in order to create a foundation for future brand strategies.

Over the past decade the car industry has transformed every feature down to the very smell of the car into a branded exercise. Brands like Kellogg's, the breakfast cereal experts, no longer count on the natural crunching sounds of their product, but design these in sound labs. Singapore Airlines ensures that the aroma in the cabin is as consistent as the color scheme, which matches the makeup and uniforms worn by the hostesses.

Every detail of brands should be created with a true sensory signature. When formulating a sensory branding strategy, one of the key criteria for success is to design a platform that will allow you to carefully select the channels, the tools, and the senses you intend to tap into when building your future brand.

It is estimated that 40 percent of the world's Fortune 500 brands will include a sensory branding strategy in their marketing plan by the end of 2006. Quite simply, their survival will depend on it. If brands want to build and maintain future loyalty, they will have to establish a strategy that appeals to all our senses. This is a fact that no serious brand builder can ignore.

### **Action Points**

- ❖ Determine to what degree your brand depends on our senses, either directly or indirectly. If possible, try to establish the nature of consumers' relationship with your brand.
- ❖ If the sensory appeal you've established in the first point were to be neutralized, and would no longer be of any value to your brand, what dollar amount would you then estimate to lose in terms of sales or brand loyalty?

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- ❖ If the loss you've established above is considerable, what can you invest in it to maintain and enhance this unique brand asset?
- ❖ If neutralizing the sensory appeal of your brand won't affect the customer sales or loyalty—is this aspect being underutilized? Or is it simply impossible to leverage in a systematic way?
- ❖ Decide how you intend to handle this opportunity. Is it worth investing in? Before you do, read chapter 3, then make up your mind.