

Sensory marketing - What is it, which brands are successful at it?

 By [Marguerite De Villiers](#)

15 Dec 2016

Our senses connect our external and internal worlds; they mediate our understanding and moderate our experiences. We decode meaning through our network of connections. These interpretations are influenced by our pre-existing knowledge, memories, preferences, assumptions, and experiences.

How can marketers take advantage of our sensory relationship with the world in which we live to enhance our relationship with the brands we consume?

First, we divide sensory perception or how we perceive through our senses into three categories:

1. Physical = Basic senses (sight, smell, taste, touch, hearing)
2. Sentiments = Sense of... (balance, humour, justice, duty, colour, rhythm, etc.)
3. Mentalities = To have sense (to understand, to make sense of, to have common sense, etc.)

Second, we acknowledge that marketing is the management and manipulation of sensory perception. Marketing establishes a connection or communication between the external (a brand, a product, a service) and the internal (the consumer; their needs, desires, and sensory perception).

Third, we apply absent presence.

An absent presence is when the original object, moment or idea (the signified) is no longer present, but rather a sign (the signifier) is present in its absence to repeat, remember or represent it.

Therefore, meaning (in the repetition, remembrance, or representation of the original) is always in need of reconstruction through interpretation. The marketer's role is to mould the consumer's interpretation and experience of what is being signified.

A logo is an absent presence. Logos means 'thought' or 'reason'. A logo represents the idea or purpose behind the brand.

Successful brands are those that apply what Simon Sinek identifies as The Golden Circle:

While most companies begin with the 'what' (the product or service that they offer), disruptive brands begin with the 'why' (an inherent belief or purpose that drives purchase).

In starting with the 'why' (an idea in the absence of something concrete), and working through to the 'how' (the anticipated impact) and finally the 'what' (the concrete presence of something), brands are able to build community, trust, identity and loyalty with their consumers.

Here are several brands that effectively applied multi-sensorial or innovative marketing:

1. Metro trains

In an attempt to get people to pay attention to public service announcements, Metro trains in Australia created a viral awareness campaign. First, they wrote and released a song on YouTube. This then led to a Tumblr site, a book, radio airplay, outdoor advertising, a smartphone game, a karaoke video, and posters that called for people to take a safety pledge. The response was phenomenal and the impact was tangible. The campaign transformed dull safety announcements into something memorable and enjoyable; and it changed people from being passive consumers into active participants:

2. Oreo

To celebrate turning 100, Oreo released a Daily twist campaign: generating conversation around the brand, placing the

brand within pop-culture, and making the brand remain relevant. They did this by creating 100 Oreo images relevant to big news headlines at the time; both reflecting and becoming news. This catapulted the brand out of the confines of its product category, and into the broader world in which the consumer lives:

3. Netflix

The Netflix Switch – it dims the lights, silences calls, orders take-aways, and turns on your shows. It transforms the concept of ‘Netflix and chill’ into a reality. People have to build the switch themselves, which makes this a relatively exclusive experience that requires knowledge and skill in electronics and programming:

4. Meet South Africa

Meet South Africa, a tourism brand, uses many visual clues among others to immerse the viewer in the world of South African sensory experiences – the feeling of sand between your toes, salty ocean air on your face, the rush of surfing, and the intricate detail of textured art; the rhythmic sound of drum and dance and language; the earthy aroma and taste of wine and fruit. This is a multisensorial experience of South Africa that does not depend solely on sight:

5. Spain's Christmas Lottery

Spain's Christmas Lottery developed a beautifully composed digital campaign. It is a short animated film that features Justino – a night-time security guard at a mannequin factory. The film tells a story through visual means – scenery, facial expressions, photographs, props, and more – with subtle music and background sounds. The lack of audio narrative leaves the story open to interpretation and the viewer looks for visual clues to piece it all together, proving that sometimes the most powerful messages are those that we have to uncover ourselves:

6. Hennessy's Odyssey Xo

It can be difficult to convey taste but Hennessy's Odyssey XO short film takes the viewer on a journey through the product's different flavour notes (called chapters here). Taste is communicated in a complex and layered audio-visual way to immerse the consumer in a multisensorial world:

7. Checkers 'Sizzles'

Checkers' Champion Boerewors campaign sells the sizzle — both through the sound of boerewors on the braai, and in the repetition of the word 'sizzle' in a song. This activates specific taste and scent associations, drawing on the consumer's existing knowledge and experience of a braai:

ABOUT MARGUERITE DE VILLIERS

Marguerite de Villiers is an anthropologist at strategic marketing consultancy Added Value. With three Social Science degrees, she applies her cultural insight and critical thinking in creative and innovative ways to explore the question of what it means to be human.

» Sensory marketing - What is it, which brands are successful at it? - 15 Dec 2016

[View my profile and articles...](#)

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>