

Listen up! Why Mastercard is becoming a sonic brand

 By Leigh Andrews

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Get ready to recognise the Mastercard brand not only with your eyes but also your ears. That's right, the latest phase of its brand evolution involves sonic melody that's set to form part of your Mastercard brand experience in the future.



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The year 2019 kicked off a successful note for Mastercard, with the culmination of a three-year change in its naming convention resulting in the brand dropping the word 'Mastercard' from its iconic logo, in select contexts.

A bold move, but research has proven that the 50-year strong symbol, of interlocked red and yellow circles, is strong enough on its own. In fact, Raja Rajamannar, chief marketing and communication officer at Mastercard, confirms that their research proves more than 80% of people spontaneously recognise the Mastercard symbol without the word 'Mastercard.'



Mastercard drops name from logo to become symbol brand

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Now, Mastercard is taking its brand recognition to the next level, by tapping into the sense of sound.

Matt Lieber, co-founder and president of Gimlet, explains the power of sound branding as follows:

“ Audio makes people feel things, and that's what makes it such a powerful medium for brands. With the explosion of podcasts, music streaming, and smart speakers, an audio strategy is no longer a 'nice-to-have' for brands – it's a necessity. A sonic identity — the audio calling card for a brand — is now just as important as a brand's visual identity. ”

Listen to the master anthem, embedded below – you'll be hearing it everywhere you go cashless...

The new melody is set to further entrench brand familiarity, whether your transactions take place in the realm of the physical, digital or even voice – yes really, *TechCrunch* reports that voice shopping is set to hit \$40bn by 2022.

We definitely are headed towards a world beyond cash.



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So Mastercard is definitely ahead of the trend in this regard, with the melody forming the foundation of the company's sound architecture and, while adaptable across genres and cultures, it will extend to musical scores, sound logos and ringtones, as well as hold music and point-of-sale acceptance sounds.

Like (Mastercard) music to our ears: Symbolic sonic

To ensure the Mastercard melody would resonate with people the world over, Mastercard tapped musicians, artists and agencies from across the globe, including Mike Shinoda of Linkin Park.

Mastercard will also launch a new multi-channel marketing programme in the lead up to the 61st Grammy Awards, featuring Grammy-nominated artist Camila Cabello in the first creative output set to feature the brand's sound logo.

“ Camila performing Something's Gotta Give at Mastercard's [#PricelessSurprises](#) last night [#MastercardxCamila](#) (via benmp13 on Instagram) pic.twitter.com/AMGddESjsj— Camila Cabello News Media (@CabelloMedia) [February 7, 2019](#) ”

Here Beatrice Cornacchia, herself a Mastercard veteran of more than 27 years – currently senior vice president of marketing and communications for Middle East & Africa at Mastercard International – shares with me some insight into their long-running Priceless campaign, as well as its evolution over the years and how the latest iteration taps into the current digital climate...

■ **Let's start with the fact that Priceless is actually a two-decade old campaign. How has it evolved over the years, from one of storytelling to story-making and now story-inspiring, as consumer needs have changed and they now essentially cocreate stories and brand experiences?**

I'm so proud that Priceless started as a way of advertising for Mastercard all that time ago, but today, Priceless is part of our DNA. The underlying concept of Priceless is the deep emotional connection that fills people's life with meaning and purpose, empowering Mastercard's consumers in the region with priceless possibilities in their world.

The idea when it first started, was to be the enabler of a specific Priceless moment for our consumers. Back then, we were just understanding that specific Priceless moment. But moving forward, the role of marketers has changed dramatically.

Nowadays, consumers want to be at the centre of their communication. As a result, we want to be story-making, with our consumers as the hero of their Priceless moments, and Mastercard helping them to achieve those moments.

As a result, going forward we will not produce any traditional advertising – instead, we want to promote pieces of content relevant to our consumers. In aiming to bring more priceless moments, our brand positioning is, “Mastercard is connecting people to priceless possibilities.”

■ ***Explain the context of the current Mastercard brand evolution and shift to becoming both a symbol brand and a digital organisation.***

Mastercard is among the most recognisable modern brands across the globe. As such, it is our responsibility to always be forward-thinking and give our consumers the best possible experience, from a business perspective. That’s why we want to keep our simple, secure and seamless experience, both as a technology company and as the brand promise.

So yes, the journey started in 2016, when we felt the need to modernise our brand, that more clearly seen in the digital experience. That was the first stage.



Beatrice Cornacchia, senior vice president of marketing and communications for MEA at Mastercard International.



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But you only become the most powerful brand when you can remove your company name completely. That was the announcement of three weeks ago that we were becoming a true symbol brand, as the Mastercard name is no longer part of our brand. It is strong and solid enough that people recognise it, even without the name.

■ ***That’s quite something. And now it’s time for the next frontier: The brand’s ‘sensory extension’ launches today. Tell us about the Mastercard sonic brand.***

To set the context, there are two factors at play: Firstly, brands’ relationship with consumers has changed dramatically, as we now have much more touchpoints with them than ever before. It’s important that we communicate with them in the right way.

Secondly, the world is definitely going digital. So the opportunity for a consumer to associate with a physical logo is going to decrease tremendously. That’s why we feel that the move to a sonic brand is the best possible solution.



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In addition, this is also what consumers are telling us. The way consumers live, shop and pay has completely changed. With the rising popularity of podcasts and voice shopping, the launch of our sonic brand is a step towards becoming closer to that digital consumer.

As Mastercard is a global brand, we wanted to create a melody that has certain criteria that would be the same anywhere in

the world, but at the same time, keeping the regional and local touch.

That's why the melody you heard above is seen as the official anthem, with the idea that local flavours will also be created, because music is passion, it's something inside yourself. That's the beauty of the sonic brand – it's one thing at the global level, but can be given a regional touch.

■ **Explain exactly what we're hearing in the Mastercard melody - what is the brand communicating?**

It has been an 18-month journey, in which we have worked with musicians and expert music agencies to create a melody that is recognisable, while also pleasant to hear. We wanted to communicate five different elements:

- We wanted something **reliable and inclusive**. While the music should talk to you, it shouldn't exclude anyone.
- We wanted a melody that is **passionate and energetic**. That's something deep in the DNA of Mastercard.
- The third element is one of **surprise**. Most probably, it's not something you'd expect from a technology company like Mastercard. That's why when you hear the music, some tones come in that are surprising.
- Fourth is the element of **delight**. We want to pass along a simple, sophisticated feeling.
- Last but not least, we want the music to **captivate** its audience. A real experience is always touching.

These are the five elements we hope you feel when you listen to our sonic brand.

■ **Looking ahead then, we know you launched Selfie Pay in 2016 as well as biometric payments last year. How does all of this innovation help the brand stay relevant and ahead of competitors in today's digital world, especially as a payments enabler, where trust is pivotal?**

As we are forward-thinking, we know it is our responsibility to always have an eye on the curve, so Mastercard will continue its journey of innovation. Whatever is happening in the market, it's all good as the more challenges we face, the better product we can offer our consumers.

That's perfectly in line with the new way consumers interact with brands and each other in their daily life, in the way they shop, pay and experience.

It's a positive trend and Mastercard is definitely in the front seat when it comes to these technological innovations.

That sounds like brand recognition success to me. For more of Mastercard's innovation, follow their updates on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).

ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

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