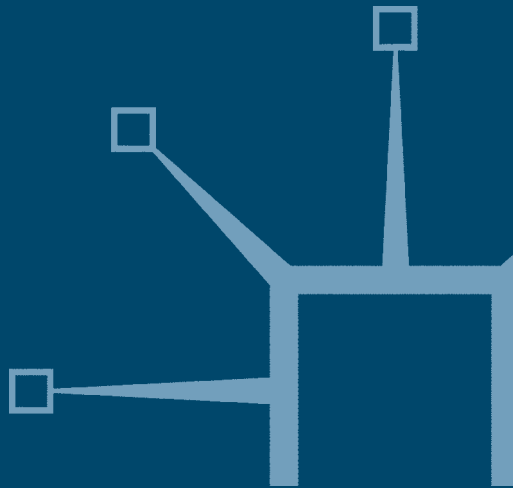


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# SENSORY MARKETING

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Bertil Hultén, Niklas Broweus  
and Marcus van Dijk



# Sensory Marketing

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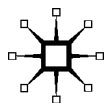
# **SENSORY MARKETING**

**Bertil Hultén**

**Niklas Broweus**

**Marcus van Dijk**

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# PREFACE

This book has its origins in our shared interest in sensory marketing. It began in June 2006 with an idea for a research project at the Baltic Business School (BBS) at Kalmar University, Sweden. It was obvious to us that most marketers had long overlooked the significance of the human senses in marketing, especially how different sense expressions such as scent, music, design, taste, and texture can help clarify the identity of a firm or a brand.

Such sense expressions in marketing can be critical to an individual's sensory experience of a brand or a service landscape, where by "service landscape" we mean the physical and virtual places in which a firm or brand is highlighted to create an image. We noticed that more and more firms had a growing interest in the significance of the human senses in marketing, not just in terms of the sight sense often expressed through advertising and TV commercials.

Of course, different sense expressions contribute to the image or mental conception an individual creates about a firm or a brand. Thus, we were curious to find out more about the role of the five human senses and to further explore sensory marketing in practice.

At the same time, it was obvious that sensory marketing was sparsely treated in national and international research and literature. This amazed us, because the five human senses – smell, sound, sight, taste, and touch – should in our opinion underlie the purchase and consumption experiences a firm creates through its marketing strategy and tactics. Primarily for this reason, we realized the need to develop new marketing knowledge.

## AIM AND CONTENT

The main purpose of this book is to analyze and discuss what sensory marketing is all about in marketing management practice as well as from a theoretical perspective. It is our hope that the book will be a



source of knowledge and rethinking for marketers, researchers, and students.

The content of the book is global in approach and offers a general view and understanding of sensory marketing. Concepts and theories are integrated with real examples from firms and organizations around the world. We illustrate how each of the five human senses is to be seen as a point of departure for a firm's sensorial strategies and customer treatment. We also suggest a comprehensive conceptual framework and introduce our ideas and thoughts about sensory marketing.

- Chapter 1 discusses what sensory marketing is. Sensorial strategies are presented in relation to how the five human senses are at the center of marketing. Finally, a discussion follows about the importance of the human senses, the brand, and the individual's experience logic.
- Chapter 2 presents Marketing 3.0 in terms of the change forces that are affecting marketing management practice at the beginning of the twenty-first century. In particular, the chapter discusses the growth of the cultural value shift and of digital technology in what is called the "binary society." It also discusses the significance of aesthetics, emotions, and experiences for sensory marketing.
- Chapter 3 introduces the smell sense from the perspectives of the firm and the individual. Different sense expressions to facilitate a smell experience are discussed and presented. In addition, the meaning of scents for employees' working environment and health are emphasized. Hotel Park Hyatt Vendôme is presented as an example of the brand as a smell experience.
- Chapter 4 discusses the sound sense and the meaning of sound for both firms and individuals. It describes how different sound expressions can contribute to a sound experience. Moreover, the holistic importance of sound is discussed, where "personality" and "artists" are key words. Finally, the Saab brand of the U.S. carmaker General Motors is presented as an example of the brand as a sound experience.
- Chapter 5 is about using the sight sense to clarify a firm's or a brand's identity and values. Different sense expressions to visualize a brand and facilitate a sight experience are discussed. The growing importance of the holism of the shape of the service landscape is discussed in detail. The U.S. fashion retailer Abercrombie & Fitch is presented as an example of the brand as a sight experience.
- Chapter 6 uncovers the taste sense from its often hidden role in marketing. This is followed by a presentation of how different sense expressions can offer a taste experience. Then examples are given of how a firm can use different tastes in marketing. As an example of the brand as a taste experience the British retail chain Hotel Chocolat is presented.

- Chapter 7 discusses the touch sense and the importance of physical and psychological interaction between the firm and the individual. In addition, the sense expressions that are the focus of a touch experience are described in detail. The chapter also discusses the importance of accessibility and digital technology for interaction with a brand. The Volvo brand of the U.S. carmaker Ford is presented as an example of the brand as a touch experience.
- Chapter 8 presents our key concepts and thoughts about sensory marketing. Concepts such as the brand soul, sensors, sensations, and sense expressions are discussed and illustrated. Finally, the creation of a supreme sensory experience is illustrated using the example of the U.S. grocery retailer Whole Foods.

## STARTING POINTS

Some researchers claim that the significance of the human senses has been neglected for a long time, despite their importance for clarifying brand identity and brand image, and despite the fact that it is well documented and known in science that the five senses affect human behavior. This is one of the most important theoretical starting points in our research into the significance of the human senses in marketing.

Sensory marketing builds on theoretical foundations where the experience of a brand – whether a good or a service – is viewed holistically. The human senses are the focus of a firm’s marketing activities that emphasize the creation and delivery of sensory experiences. This allows the firm to convey its brand identity and its values at a deeper individual level. Sensory marketing can contribute to an individual’s final purchase and consumption experience, where the five human senses interact in a supreme sensory experience of a brand.

Our picture of marketing is different from the common view. Traditional mass and relationship marketing theories, with their point of departure in how to market goods and services, do not offer satisfactory answers to the question of *how* a firm should treat its customers in a more individualized way in today’s society. Unlike mass and relationship marketing theories, sensory marketing focuses on the accomplishment of the supreme sensory experience.

The classical 4P model in a consumer goods marketing context (Kotler) and the well-known 3OR model in a relationship marketing

context (Gummesson) ignore the significance of the human senses and the supreme sensory experience of the individual. For this reason we take as our starting point other theoretical conceptualizations of how sensory marketing can be applied in marketing management practice at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

Our research into the significance of the five human senses in marketing builds on the ideas of such researchers as Morris Holbrook, Bernd H. Schmitt, Alex Simonson, Marc Gobé, and Martin Lindstrom. We share their fundamental belief that emotional, aesthetic, and sensory aspects, beyond functional aspects, are an important point of departure for the supreme sensory experience in contemporary marketing practice.

## METHODOLOGY

This book is in large part a result of our thirst for knowledge and our curiosity. It was quickly apparent that we had entered a marketing domain that was relatively unexplored. No evidence or support was to be found in either mass marketing or relationship marketing theories to explain how marketing could create the supreme sensory experience. However, these theories were an important theoretical starting point for understanding how goods and services could be seen as *means* to facilitating sensory experiences for individuals as customers.

This led us into thoughts about how we could develop a conceptual framework and model of sensory marketing that was not rooted in traditional concepts and theories. We looked for scientific articles, books, and other sources relating to the five human senses in libraries, on databases, and on websites. We found that a great deal of information existed but that a more complete, holistic view of the human senses was missing that would explain how the human senses could contribute to an individual's sensory experiences in marketing.

For that reason, our methodology has been characterized by the search for knowledge of how firms look upon the significance of the human senses in marketing either in the form of established concepts and theories from the literature or in the form of existing marketing practices. In the research process the interplay between actual marketing practice and the development of concepts and theories has

been important. To describe the research in more traditional scientific terms, *grounded theory* has been used. This method allows researchers to develop new concepts, models, or theories as a result of the research process.

It was impossible to use the literature to define in advance exactly what concepts we should look for. Instead, our search for new concepts has followed our interest in investigating unconventional angles in marketing. We contacted a number of firms to arrange interviews with managers and employees whom we considered to have empirical knowledge about the significance of the human senses in marketing. A number of personal interviews were conducted with CEOs, marketing managers, and store managers from U.S. and European companies during 2006–2008.

Of course, the ideas, concepts, and examples presented here are hand-picked to fit with the main purpose of the book. A number of case studies and examples are used to illustrate best practice when we discuss and present a sensory marketing framework. The U.S. firms are ahead of European, including Scandinavian, firms, though the gap is narrow.

## CONCEPTUAL DEVELOPMENT

*Sensory Marketing* builds on our own experiences of marketing through articles, research reports, active participation, and observations in the field and on other authors' work where the human senses are in focus. By combining our experiences with those of other authors, we had the opportunity to develop our thoughts about sensory marketing and let new concepts play a leading role.

Bertil Hultén's interest in a post-modern perspective in marketing is a major reason for the recognition of the growth in individualization in contemporary society. The importance of modern and post-modern value systems has been emphasized in his research as a way to define and understand current marketing management practice. This has made a major contribution to our understanding of the transition toward an increasingly individualized culture, as represented by cultural value shifts and digital technology.

Niklas Broweus and Marcus van Dijk's interest in how firms can use the human senses in marketing management practice has been

another major reason behind our understanding of the role of the individual and the demand for individualization. Their earlier thesis work showed how firms can use the five human senses in marketing to come closer to customers.

Sensory marketing has become a synthesis of what contemporary society demands from a firm and what a firm can do to create sensory experiences with the help of the five human senses. The following list outline some of the concepts we introduce as a result of our work.

- “Sensory experience” refers to how individuals react when a firm, in offering and delivering goods and services, participates in their purchase and consumption process through the involvement of the five human senses.
- “Sense expression” refers to the different ways in which a firm can clarify its identify and values in relation to the five human senses. Each human sense offers scope for a firm to distinguish and develop its own identity and uniqueness to establish an image of a product or a brand.
- “Sensorial strategies,” “sensors,” “sensations,” and the “brand soul” refer to how a firm can participate in creating a personal touch in marketing. Sensory marketing is all about offering sensations as expressions for the brand soul, which gives opportunities to reach the individual’s mind and heart in providing the supreme sensory experience.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We would like to thank Abercrombie & Fitch, Apollo, the Department of Restaurant and Culinary Arts at Örebro University, Gina Tricot, ICA Ahold, InWhite, Lindex, the Ice Hotel, the Nordic Light Hotel, Saab Automobile, Scandinavian Airlines (SAS), Sensaytion, Sonic Brand, the Swedish Institute for Food and Biotechnology (SIK), Volvo Cars, and Whole Foods. All the firms and organizations mentioned have been generous in sharing their experiences with us and giving us valuable information.

Many thanks to our colleagues Professor Hans Jansson, Dr. Leif Rytting, and Hans Allmér at the Baltic Business School, Kalmar University, Sweden, for stimulating intellectual discussions and important theoretical contributions.

Special thanks to our sparring partners Anders Abrahamsson and Lars Abramson at our Swedish publisher, Liber AB, Malmö, Sweden. We also want to thank the editors of Palgrave Macmillan, who published this English edition of our book.

PREFACE

Finally, we want to appreciate our families and friends who have supported us during the research process. This has been the start of a long journey that has not yet come to an end.

Bertil Hultén, Niklas Broweus, and Marcus van Dijk  
*Herreberga Farm, Norrköping, and Stockholm, Sweden, 2009*

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# WHAT IS SENSORY MARKETING?

This chapter presents sensory marketing in practice and theory. A sensory marketing framework is discussed and compared with mass and relationship marketing. Five sensorial strategies are suggested that emphasize the human senses as the center of a firm's sensory marketing. At the end of the chapter the importance of the human senses, the brand, and experience logic in sensory marketing is discussed.

## HUMAN SENSES AS RESOURCE

### **Sensory marketing is here to stay**

The human senses have long been ignored in marketing, despite our awareness of their great significance. The five human senses are of crucial importance for an individual's experience of different purchase and consumption processes. It is through the senses that every individual becomes conscious of and perceives firms, products, and brands. Because of this, further knowledge about the human senses might make a firm's marketing more successful and an individual's sensory experience more personalized.

Of the five human senses, the sight sense has so far dominated marketing practice. There is no doubt that the other human senses – smell, sound, taste, and touch – have been neglected for a long time, despite their importance when an individual considers and decides about a product or a brand.

Growing interest in sensory marketing among practitioners, consultants, and researchers means that all five human senses are today receiving increased attention.<sup>1</sup> More often than not, the interest is in making customers aware of a product or a brand in order to reach tactical, short-term sales targets. In contrast to this, sensory marketing in



our opinion is to be viewed strategically as a way to clarify a firm’s identity and values with the long-term goal of creating brand awareness and establishing a sustainable brand image.

The present development of sensory marketing illustrates the emergence of a new epoch

“ A new marketing epoch grows up ”

in marketing, one in which the five senses will be at the center of a firm’s marketing strategy and tactics. For that reason it becomes more important for firms – whether they are selling traditional consumer goods or a service – to affect and influence customers in new, provocative, imaginative ways in order to seize grab hold of the human senses.

An excellent example of the importance of the human senses was a summer 2006 TV commercial for the Swedish automobile brand Volvo, part of the Ford Motor Company. The commercial was broadcast on the Swedish channel TV4 under the theme “The Sixth Sense.” When one drives a car, it is obvious that at least three of the human senses are activated: sight, sound, and touch. Volvo understood the importance of the human senses and spread the message that a Volvo car should be seen as “The Sixth Sense.” A car should be a pleasure to drive and offer safety and an extraordinary driving experience; for example, the Volvo senses when it is close to colliding with another vehicle and automatically slows down.

The service landscape is also on its way to becoming an environment for building brand images rather than only selling goods and services.

“ A Volvo should be considered “The Sixth Sense” ”

More and more shops, supermarkets, hotels, destinations, restaurants, malls, and shopping centers are building emotional linkages in addition to rational ones to attract the human senses through sensory experiences.<sup>2</sup> Starbucks coffee shops illustrate this development.

**Starbucks – A Sensory Experience**

Starbucks is the world’s largest chain of coffee shops, with around 40 million visitors per day. A visit to Starbucks is much more than a cup of coffee. By using a sensory marketing framework the company creates a deeper and more personal relationship with its customers. This is

achieved by involving all five human senses to offer the customer a total sensory experience.

As early as the 1980s Starbucks developed a strategy for creating and delivering a sensory experience to consumers as a way to strengthen the brand. Giving the brand further aesthetic and emotional values and dimensions was seen as essential to creating a view of the chain as a third place outside of home and work.<sup>3</sup> A visit to Starbucks should be an experience for the mind and the heart.

The inspiring environment makes it comfortable to read a book or talk with friends. The green and yellow of the interior, together with pleasant lighting, offer a soothing and restful visual experience. The relaxing music is selected with precision and care by the Starbucks Content Team to create the “sound of Starbucks.” Add to this the smell and taste of the freshly ground coffee, as well as the comfortable texture, solidity, and shape of the armchairs, and you have the characteristics of the sensory experience of the brand.

Starbucks uses a sensory marketing framework in creating an atmosphere where experiences can be shaped, emotions can be expressed, and memories can be created.

## Well-known truths are no longer true

Marketing is entering an era when tested ideas and concepts are being reconsidered. The traditional mass markets are slowly disappearing and are being replaced by fragmented markets with numerous segments, where individualization and tailor-made products are key. One consequence is that traditional mass marketing, which once dominated the marketing arena, is being questioned more than ever before as a profitable and successful way to reach customers.<sup>4</sup>

The main argument is that the cost advantages related to mass marketing, especially through advertising and the well-known “cost per thousand” criterion, are no longer enough to send a message to everybody. Instead, they persuade only a few. In Europe the utility of advertising and TV commercials has been strongly questioned during the past decade. New communication channels have been established, illustrating the fragmentation of the market.<sup>5</sup>



Advertising is no longer enough



During recent years, for example, McDonald's in the United States has reduced the proportion of its marketing budget spent on TV commercials from two-thirds to one-third. The money has been invested instead in sponsoring American football sports programs, on advertising in magazines at barbershops with black and Hispanic customers, and on websites such as Yahoo and iVillage Inc.<sup>6</sup>

In the media landscape, the fragmentation goes on at breakneck speed. For example, in Sweden the number of consumer magazines increased from 118 to 152 between 2002 and 2005.<sup>7</sup> Free newspapers available in the morning at bus stops and underground stations, such as *Metro*, as well as the increased number of enclosures in evening papers, often with beauty, health, home, or leisure as their main theme, also illustrate this increasing fragmentation.

During the past decade, the development toward more and more relationship and micro marketing has been expressed through the use of customer relationship management (CRM) and customer-specific marketing (CSM). These techniques have been used by many firms to strengthen customer relationships.<sup>8</sup> Often these techniques have been used in ways that are technically advanced rather than personal, which has been criticized by many observers.<sup>9</sup> As a result, marketing has become even more depersonalized, even though the firm's intention has often been the opposite.

Some researchers claim that the transition from mass marketing to relationship and micro marketing can be seen as paradigm shift.<sup>10</sup> Some think that a customer-centric view based on relationship handling and relationship orientation should be the focus of a firm's marketing strategy and tactics.<sup>11</sup>

Our research shows that there is also a need for another view, a sensory marketing framework, to solve future marketing challenges. For that reason we suggest that sensory marketing is not equivalent to either mass or relationship marketing, because it has its point of departure in the brain of the individual. The transition to sensory marketing managerial practice from mass marketing and relationship marketing managerial practice is illustrated in Table 1.1.

Sensory marketing is distinguished from mass and relationship marketing by having its origin in the five human senses. It is in the human brain, in both the left and

**“ Sensory marketing is not about the masses or the segment; it is about the individual ”**

TABLE 1.1 From mass and relationship to sensory marketing

	Mass marketing	Relationship marketing	Sensory marketing
Marketing	Goods logic	Service logic	Experience logic
	Exchange perspective	Relationship perspective	Brand perspective
	Transactional marketing	Relational marketing	Sensorial marketing
Strategic marketing	Product focus	Customer focus	Sense focus
	Customer acquisition	Customer retention	Customer treatment
	Transactional strategies	Relational strategies	Sensorial strategies
Tactical marketing	Persuasion and promotion	Interaction and interplay	Dialogue and online interactivity
	One-way communication	Two-way communication	Multidimensional communication
	Production technology	Information technology	Digital technology

Source: Developed from B. Hultén, N. Broweus, and M. van Dijk, *Sinnesmarknadsföring* (Malmö: Liber AB, 2008).

right hemispheres, that the mental flows, processes, and psychological reactions take place that result in an individual's sensory experience.

A sensory marketing framework is based on the assumption that a firm should reach the five human senses at a deeper level than is reached by mass and relationship marketing. Because of this, sensory marketing is concerned with a firm's treatment of the customer, that is, with how it meets the individual in a personal, mutual way through dialogue, interactivity, multidimensional communication, and digital technology. This is different from customer acquisition in mass marketing or customer retention in relationship marketing.

The treatment of the customer should be based on logic and rationality as well as emotions and values to create brand awareness and establish a sustainable image of a brand. This image is the result of the sensory experiences an individual has of a brand. Thus, the human senses, which neither mass marketing nor relationship marketing takes into consideration, are at the center of what we call "sensory marketing." We now discuss some of the theoretical starting points.

## Sensory marketing – a model

Sensory marketing recognizes how a firm, through different sensorial strategies and sense expressions, can create brand awareness and establish a brand image that relates to the customer’s identity, lifestyle, and personality. A firm’s sensory marketing approach should, for that reason, be deliberately and strategically based on the five human senses.

But sensory marketing also recognizes how a firm should treat its customers in a more intimate and personal way than was achieved with mass and relationship marketing before. And the road to success goes to a great extent via emotion, when many customers turn away from appreciating only functional product attributes and features and instead want to see the product as an experience. In this regard different sense expressions for each human sense are of importance in facilitating the individual’s sensory experience.

Sensory marketing puts the human brain, with its five senses, at the center of marketing. It is in the brain of an individual that a brand registers and an image is created in terms of mental conceptions and imaginations. This image is a result of the experiences an individual has of a firm or a brand. Each individual has a subjective experience that we call “experience logic.” This logic is individual and personal. It is a result of how the individual’s five human senses perceive and interpret an experience, either singly or together.

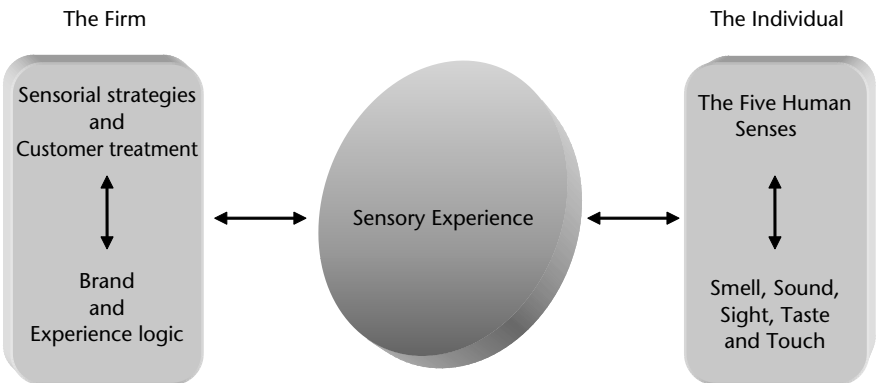


FIGURE 1.1 **Sensory marketing**

Source: B. Hultén, N. Broweus, and M. van Dijk, *Sinnesmarknadsföring* (Malmö: Liber AB, 2008).

The most important concepts underlying how firms and individuals together create and perceive sensory experiences are illustrated in Figure 1.1.

## SENSORIAL STRATEGIES AND CUSTOMER TREATMENT

Sensorial strategies for smell, sound, sight, taste, and touch are now presented in more detail to give an idea of what sensory marketing is all about in practice. Chapters 3–7 present a more exhaustive analysis and discussion of how appropriate sensorial strategies can be worked out by a firm for each of the five human senses.

### A sensorial smell strategy

The smell sense is closely related to our emotional life, and scents can strongly affect our emotions. A human being can remember more than 10,000 different scents, and the perception of a scent experienced earlier is enough for us to associate it with earlier memories.

Scents can contribute to sensory experiences that create lasting memory pictures in the customer and build awareness and create an image of a brand both temporarily and long term. This can happen through short-term marketing activities, where the role of the scent is to create attention around a product or a brand, or long-term strategies, where the scent becomes a major element of the identity of a firm.

Certain expressions regarding the composition of a scent are decisive for our scent experiences. Among these are the natural connection of a scent to a product – its *product congruence* – and the *intensity*

of a scent. These expressions are important when scents that seem to be linked to products tend to contribute more consciously in a positive way to the sensory experience.

Differences between men and women regarding the perception of scents explain why *sex* as an expression also is of great importance in considering an appropriate sensorial strategy for the smell sense. In contrast, subtle scents can affect an individual more unconsciously.

“

A smell strategy pays attention to a brand, creates a good atmosphere, and increases the customer's well-being

”

In a service situation, for example, scents can increase the well-being of customers and contribute to a good atmosphere. Scents can also have a positive impact on customers' loyalty to a firm. The scents of vanilla and clementine, in particular, affect customers' behavior by making them unconsciously stay longer in service landscapes such as shops or supermarkets than they would otherwise have done.

Scents also improve the recall and the recognition of a brand. Some firms try to connect specific scents to their brands through what are called *signature scents*. This connection can also be made through a legal *scent brand*, whereby a firm uses a scent alone as a registered trade mark. One advantage can be that the firm no longer has to use visual logotypes in its marketing strategy and tactics.

### A sensorial sound strategy

Sound has always been of great importance in society. Most people attach a meaning to sound, and music as a source of inspiration is often used as a way to shape a person's identity. From birth, babies achieve a better understanding and perception of reality through sound.

More and more firms are realizing that sound can be a strategy to strengthen the identity and image of a brand. Sound expressions such as *jingles*, *voice*, and *music* offer possibilities to create a sound experience. Such expressions can also be used to create *advertency* around a product or a brand or to reinforce a chosen *theme*.



A sound strategy takes into account that the customers react with feelings when music and voices in present



Sound – often through music – is taken into consideration when service landscapes such as shops and supermarkets are trying to create a good atmosphere. When sound is used consciously, a firm has great opportunities to create a *signature sound* that characterizes its brand. It is also possible to use and register a legal *sound brand*, as illustrated by the brand Hemglass in Sweden and Hjem-Is in Denmark. Dealers who sell and deliver ice cream to Scandinavian households play a well-known jingle from the loudspeaker of their van to tell customers it is time to buy ice cream.

A sound strategy takes into account the fact that customers react with feelings to music and voices. In creating a sound experience it is

important to have a holistic view of a firm whereby all sounds, from the switchboard to the voices of the employees, are considered. Using an artist or music producer can be attractive as a means of expressing the identity of a brand in a new, fascinating way. This requires trying to become more personal or individualized.

Digital technology offers possibilities for a firm to balance and control sound to create acceptable acoustics in the service environment. Creating a sound experience can require the elimination of sound that is disturbing. This elimination can be achieved with “sound walls,” which control sound between different spaces.

### A sensorial sight strategy

Visualization as a strategy for the sight sense means creating brand awareness and establishing an image of a product or a brand that in turn sharpens the customer’s sensory experiences. The picture a firm wants to convey of itself then contributes to its identity and is the basis for the image customers have of it.

CEO Jörgen Appelqvist, founder and owner of the Swedish fashion retailer Gina Tricot, points out the significance of a strategy for the sight sense: “What the eyes see is extremely important. I say that the eyes buy 70 or 80 percent of what people buy. This is enormously, enormously important to bear in mind.”

A firm’s or a brand’s identity, as a distinguishing characteristic, is often expressed through different aesthetic elements in marketing such as advertising, visual and verbal identity, design, and style, but also through electronic media, Internet homepages, or employees. In many circumstances – for example, in the case of commodities – a visualized identity can help customers recognize a brand.

Sight is generally held to be the most powerful of the human senses, and it is also the most seductive. The sight sense and the visual system let us discover *changes* and *differences* when we see a new design, a different package, or a new shop interior. A picture is formed on the retina of the eye, where contrasts and differences are reinforced with regard to color and shape, for example. Every picture formed is compared with previous experiences

“

A sight strategy requires that something look different when all visual changes are discovered by the viewer

”



and memories; every new picture has a relationship to earlier sensory experiences.

For this reason a sight strategy rests upon a number of visual sight expressions, each of which, alone or together, can clarify goods and services as well as the service landscape. Expressions such as *design*, *packaging*, and *style* are often more closely associated with goods than with services. On the other hand, expressions such as *color*, *light*, and *theme* can occur in both goods and service encounters, which is also true for expressions such as *graphic*, *exterior*, and *interior*.

### A sensorial taste strategy

The taste sense is one of our most distinct emotional senses. This fact is often expressed in everyday life through concepts such as *sweet*, *sour*, and *a matter of taste*. We use the taste buds on the tongue to sense tastes, although there are also taste buds in the palate and in the throat.

To strengthen a firm's or a brand's identity, taste experiences of different kinds can contribute to creating an image of a product or a brand. It does not matter whether a firm or a brand naturally attracts the taste sense with its products.

Thus, tastes can work as a spice for a brand to give it further dimensions. When firms are providing drink and food, this is a common way to interact with customers and facilitate their sensory experiences. It can also happen in situations where rival firms compete with products that are similar in terms of price and quality. In these cases tastes can differentiate one firm's brand if, for example, food, drink, or confectionery is added to attract customers and get their attention.

Sense expressions such as *name*, *presentation*, and *knowledge* are important and contribute to the taste experiences of customers. Knowledge about how, for example, different tastes and taste compositions react together can make the sensory experience of the individual deeper and more meaningful. It is also important to consider how food and drink are presented to customers. It has been shown that descriptive names can increase the sale of particular dishes by nearly 30 percent at restaurants.

Moreover, a taste experience can be dependent on how different senses – for example,



A taste strategy  
differentiates a brand  
and offers surplus value  
to customers



smell, sight, and touch – *interact* in a *symbiosis*, which can lead to *synergies* for a much stronger taste experience. In this regard *lifestyle* and *environment* – for example, the character of a restaurant – are of importance, as is the desire for the customer's *delight*.

The taste an individual perceives comprises much more than only the brand's actual taste; it includes scent, sound, design, and texture. For this reason, the concept of "taste" is often more related to the customer's whole sensory experience than to just what is put in the mouth.

### A sensorial touch strategy

The touch sense is the tactile sense by which we have physical contact with the surrounding world and can investigate three-dimensional objects. The touch sense also contributes to building a *form sense* that tells us whether an object is sharp, hard, or round, say. In this regard, it is not necessary for us to touch the object itself.<sup>12</sup>

We can remember and relive how something feels through simply looking at it or thinking about it. Most firms have not yet realized the significance of the human senses for a sustainable marketing, but brands that contribute to unique touch experiences have good opportunities to create an identity and image around a product in terms of *tactile marketing*.

Brands can be clarified through tactile sense expressions such as *material* and *surface* in product and service landscapes, and also through *temperature* and *weight*. One example is that heavy objects usually are associated with high quality. Other sense expressions of importance for the touch experience are *form* and *stability*, of which the well-known green Coca Cola bottle is an excellent example in terms of its unique shape.

For physical interaction with customers to be possible requires that a firm's products are available in physical form. Customers must have the option to touch, squeeze, turn, and invert different products. The encouragement of touching can lead to customers being willing to interact with products they usually do not notice. It increases the chances for impulse buying or unplanned purchases.<sup>13</sup>

The touch experience is also of importance in purchasing and consuming services. This fact is often recognized,



A touch strategy makes it possible for customers really to feel and touch a brand



for example, through soft chairs for comfort at a travel company and through hard chairs and tables at a fast-food restaurant.

Finally, it is important to note that digital technology offers increased possibilities to create realistic touch experiences during product development. Digital technology can produce a touch experience through simulated pressure and vibrations, for example, for aircraft, cars, or videogames. Technology is also available that stretches the skin when a digital object is touched, which makes it possible to replicate the sense of touching something that is visualized on a screen.

## THE HUMAN SENSES ARE AT THE CENTER

Our research shows that many firms are not serious enough about turning their marketing toward the human senses with a clear strategic direction. Instead, they make more short-sighted and haphazard use of the senses without any distinct analysis. When the human senses are at the center of sensory marketing, a firm's chances of distinguishing a brand are simplified. In this case it is necessary for a firm to try new paths and to be innovative.

To establish emotional linkages to customers, a permanent presence is required in the brand consciousness of the individual. This can be achieved in sensory marketing if all five human senses are activated in getting closer to and deeper into the customer's mind and heart. At the same time, it is necessary to make some kind of imprint on the consciousness of the individual, who is expected to be able to recognize the firm following the sense expressions the firm leaves. This means that sensory marketing with a strategic direction is based on revealing a brand's core values and identity with the help of all five human senses. We discuss this issue further in Chapter 8.

Inga-Lill Holmberg and Miriam Salzer-Mörling think that the question of how a firm's identity and image are portrayed brings into focus

the importance of what a firm stands for and the values it has.<sup>14</sup> It increases the importance of "looking right" and express the "right values." It thus becomes of the utmost importance for a firm to

“

A firm should try to reach all five human senses in strategic marketing

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impress, to express itself, and to leave imprints in being attractive to the customers.

This notion is supported by Marc Gobé, who believes that a firm should aim more clearly to focus on consumers' brains and minds in trying to understand how the culture of society and *zeitgeist* affect issues of individualization and lifestyle.<sup>15</sup> Gobé also states that to create emotional linkages to customers, a firm needs to develop a more imaginative and human culture.

In this case, emotional and intangible values as well as aesthetic experiences become of greater significance with respect to the human senses. The artistic sphere has for this reason become a model for many firms and has resulted in a "signature economy."<sup>16</sup> Here the question of how a firm should shape itself, communicate, and visualize its brand through the human senses is of strategic importance.

A sensory experience in general acts to stimulate one or more of the human senses, but the role of each sense has not always been well thought out in marketing strategy and tactics. We believe that it is risky for a firm not to reach all five human senses in a strategic way to illustrate its identity. The sensory experience a firm offers a customer might be seen as very successful from the firm's and the customer's points of view, but it might have the potential to be even bigger.

It is of great importance that an individual's sensory experience is in accordance with the firm's core values to deliver a connected and uniform message to customers. The aim is a strategic direction that emphasizes a message (or signal) for each of the customer's five senses. But sensory marketing goes one step further in its desire to create a supreme sensory experience of a brand that involves all five human senses and ultimately results in successful customer treatment.

Sensory marketing can increase the quality of customer treatment, which can lead to stronger brand recognition and brand image in the long term. Another reason to use sensory marketing is the possibility further to deepen and individualize the experience of a brand. The hope is to offer customers new sensory experiences of different kinds that can increase customer value and personal satisfaction.

In this regard, sensory marketing is not about effecting a transaction with customers through traditional advertising, as mass marketing emphasizes. Nor is it about persuading customers to start or maintain a relationship, as relationship marketing emphasizes, even if it

is possible to have a personal relationship with a brand.<sup>17</sup> Instead, sensory marketing is about treating customers through sensorial strategies to accomplish a supreme sensory experience.

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An advertising experience is not the same as a sensory experience for the individual

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In advertising research, it has been shown that the individual's mental conceptions of a brand come from two different directions. The advertising in itself is one important source of information; the image in the individual's mind is the other. Generally speaking, for marketers advertising is about, on the one hand, connecting central elements and, on the other, showing peripheral elements in different messages. It is evident that central elements compete with peripheral elements in getting the customer's attention.<sup>18</sup>

The central elements include the concrete message and the logotype or other graphic symbols, and these elements are generally very few. The peripheral elements include everything else that cannot be related to the concrete message, logotype, or graphic symbols, for example, design, color, exterior, scent, sound, music, or environment.<sup>19</sup>

Micael Dahlén claims that in the world of advertising, peripheral elements, which might attract the human senses, are the “evil parts,” because people are more attracted to and tempted to accept these elements. One explanation for this statement is that the central elements emphasize so-called cognitive information, which requires more brain processing activity on the part of the consumer. One of Dahlén's conclusions is that “it is dangerous to use too many peripheral elements” in an advertising experience.<sup>20</sup>

This statement illustrates, at the same time, the importance of the peripheral elements to an individual's sensory experience – in contrast to his or her advertising experience. We mean by this that the peripheral elements – in terms of different sense expressions – have a major role in a sensory experience of a firm compared with an advertising experience through mass marketing. Where we talk about creating a supreme sensory experience of a brand, Dahlén prefers to talk about a brand as a relationship partner at a deeper level, where the brand is also related to emotions and experiences. In this context it is also pointed out that a brand should have human characteristics and attributes.

We believe that it is only through the sensory experience that customers finally decide which product or brand to choose, whether this is a transaction or a relationship. It is through the senses that customer treatment can grab or emphasize one or more of the human senses in creating the supreme sensory experience for an individual. Such an approach consciously puts the five human senses at the center, unlike mainstream marketing. In this context it is proposed that a firm must impact customers if a transaction or a relationship is going to take place.

Sensory marketing has the individual's brain – both left and right hemispheres – as its point of departure. It is immaterial what marketing strategy and tactics a firm uses if no consideration is given to individualization in contemporary society. Each individual on his or her own is free to look for ideas, products, or brands that can contribute to shaping identity, lifestyle, and self-image. The human brain, with its mental flows, processes, and reactions, is in this regard superior to any firm in making a decision about which brand gets a place in the brain.

Sensory marketing illustrates the start of a development toward more and more individualization, resulting in increased customer power that will affect a firm's strategy and tactics. It is necessary for firms to come closer to the five human senses to allow a sensory marketing approach to become more profitable and successful.

## **BRAND AND EXPERIENCE LOGIC – THE SUBJECTIVE NATURE OF EXPERIENCE**

Sensory experiences are based on elements of both a rational (i.e., left-brain) and an emotional (i.e., right-brain) character. It might be as great an experience to do a scoop at Wal-Mart in Washington DC as to enjoy a soccer game at Emirates Stadium in London. This emphasizes the importance of looking at customers as emotional and rational individuals having a consumption experience that often is “directed towards an ambition for fantasies, feelings and having fun.”<sup>21</sup>

But what is an experience all about, and how does it arise? We have chosen a definition of an experience from the American researcher Morris Holbrook:

Finally, by *experience*, I mean that consumer value resides *not* in the product purchased, *not* in the brand chosen, *not* in the object

possessed, but *rather* in the consumption experience(s) derived therefrom. ... In essence, the argument in this direction boils down to the proposition that all *products* provide *services* in their capacity to create need- or want-satisfying *experiences*. ... In this sense, all marketing is “services marketing.” This places the role of experience at a central position in the creation of consumer value.<sup>22</sup>

It is commonly held that an individual is the sum of his or her experiences, which result from different activities or events. When an individual is affected by stimuli – for example, during purchase and consumption processes – a different kind of more individual, private event takes place. This can happen through active participation, observation, or both, which means that an experience cannot occur without any marketing impact.<sup>23</sup>

An individual, private experience is often described using verbs such as “attract,” “admire,” or “hate,” which relate to the stimuli behind the experience.<sup>24</sup> All the marketing stimuli a firm applies to reinforce the image of a brand contribute to creating a negative, neutral, or positive experience. Individual stimuli can be perceived and interpreted differently depending on who the customer is right now.

Micael Dahlén believes that people who want to be seduced all the time search for new impressions.<sup>25</sup> In this regard, the five human senses are of significance, and it is not only the good or the service in itself that is crucial for the individual’s final sensory experience.

**“ An experience is always individual, but it can be negative, neutral, or positive ”**

Andreas Buchholz and Wolfram Wördemann claim that successful brands build on the establishment of five portals in the brains of customers.<sup>26</sup> The five portals are represented by factors such as product features and promises, norms and values, perceptions and programs, identity and self-expression, and emotions and love, which are related in different ways to the mental flows and processes of the human brain.

When an individual’s sensory experience is at the center, it is intimately associated with his or her personal characteristics, lifestyle, and social context, which reinforce the mental conceptions and pictures that exist about a brand. In this regard, the brand should stand for the experience, and all the elements it includes should increase the value

of the customer: the name, the logotype, the symbol, the employees, the price, the product, the advertising, the displays, and the store layout.<sup>27</sup>

## THE SENSES AND THE SENSORY EXPERIENCE

Each of the five human senses – smell, sound, sight, taste, and touch – contributes to an experience. Each of the senses, and all the senses together, also form the foundation of what we call the “sensory experience” (see Figure 1.2).

A sensory experience is the result of the reactions of the senses to different elements or triggers in marketing. These elements or triggers are often

**“ All kinds of change attract the attention of the human senses ”**

called “stimuli” in a traditional psychological context. In the coming chapters a more thorough discussion about the role of the five human

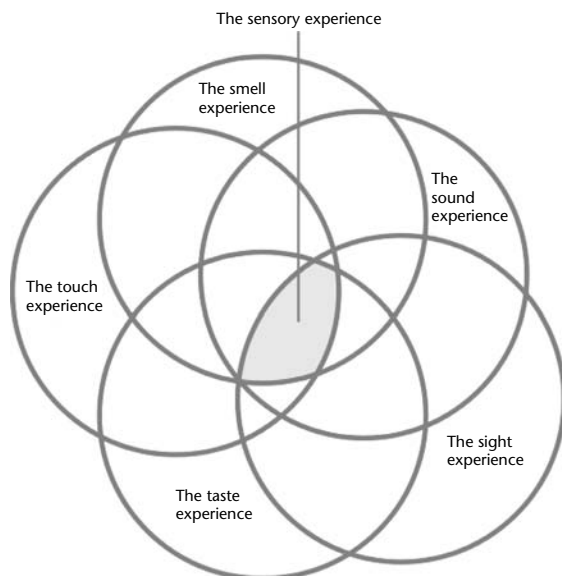


FIGURE 1.2 The sensory experience

Source: B. Hultén, N. Broweus, and M. van Dijk, *Sinnesmarknadsföring* (Malmö: Liber AB, 2008).



senses in an individual's sensory experience of a firm or a brand is presented.

Researchers at the Howard Hughes Medical Institute in the United States believe that change attracts the attention of the human senses more than anything else:

Our senses are finely attuned to change. Stationary or unchanging objects become part of the scenery and are mostly unseen. Customary sounds become background noise, mostly unheard. ... If something in the environment changes, we need to take notice because it might mean danger – or opportunity.<sup>28</sup>

The human senses are of vital importance to our experience of our existence, and without the senses no impressions could be formed. It would not be possible to understand, feel, learn, or think without the senses. The five human senses give invaluable information about different things through smell, sound, sight, taste, and touch. But it is also generally accepted that we have more than five human senses – for example, balance, temperature, and pain.

“ The sensory experience is the outcome of how a firm’s marketing is performed ”

Humankind has for a long time wondered where our thoughts come from, which has resulted in increased interest in the significance of the human senses. In earlier decades brain researchers tried in different ways to establish how electrical signals from our senses arise and result in reactions in terms of behavior.

The Nobel Prize winners David Hubel and Torsten Wiesel discovered in experiments on cats that neurons in the tangible neocortex in the back of the brain reacted when the eye was exposed to a line with a particular position and angle. It was unexpected that neurons in the brain would be able to dissect a picture and respond to a certain part of the picture with amazing precision. This research led to a more general focus in medical research on the abilities of single neurons, especially with respect to the sight sense.<sup>29</sup>

The sense organs on our head – the mouth, nose, eyes, and ears – directly mediate impulses to the human brain. Other sense organs send sense impulses to nerves via the spinal cord to the brain. We use the information that the sense organs mediate through cells or receptors.

The information stimulates the cells or receptors, which transform it into electrical signals about, for example, body location and muscle tension in order to allow us to keep our balance; into signals about emotions and feelings so that we react, and so on. In this way the sense organs mediate different kinds of signals, from which we shape our behavior.

A conscious sense impression is assumed to take place when nerve impulses reach the cerebrum. When information comes to the human brain, a person becomes conscious of, for example, a scent, a light, or a taste. But most of the millions of impulses that are sent every day happen unconsciously.

“ Most sense impressions affect us unconsciously ”

In the human brain, the limbic system controls emotions, which affect our actions and reactions. The cerebrum is responsible for directing memory and the mechanism of thought. As we are dependent on instincts and emotions, a general opinion is that the cerebrum is dependent on the limbic system, which comes before the neocortex, where logic has its place.

For a firm sensory marketing on an individual level is about making the five senses the focus of the sensory experience of a brand, especially when emotions and feelings seem to have primacy over logic and rationality in the human brain. The challenge for a firm is to trigger the touch points of the individual through the five senses to facilitate the sensory experience and satisfy individual needs and wants.

## THE INDIVIDUAL'S EXPERIENCE LOGIC

Harsh global competition makes it necessary for every firm to try to penetrate the crowds and noise of brands by coming closer to its customers. This is made more difficult when many customers look at product attributes and features as well as product quality and image as obvious elements in the experience of a brand.

We claim for this reason that the brand perspective is on its way to becoming dominant over the transactional and relationship perspectives in marketing. The main argument for this is the brand perspective's focus on the individual's sensory experiences of goods, services,

and relationships. It always has its point of departure in a general holistic context, that is, the so-called *Gestalt*, which all individuals are striving for from a psychological point of view.

When the *Gestalt* arises in a complex interplay among the human senses, we believe that goods, services, or relationships in themselves do not constitute the real grounds for the experience of a brand. Among most individuals, either a transaction-based (occasional) or relationship-based (repetitive) exchange of goods and services takes place, which illustrates the importance of a brand in a private context. In this way a brand can contribute to forming and maintaining anonymous or long-term relationships characterized by trust and commitment.

“ The brand perspective focuses on the individual’s experience of goods, services, and relationships ”

Some researchers claim that a brand should not be seen only as a logotype, which is the general opinion. Instead a logotype should correspond to a trade mark, which can be expressed through an emblem, a symbol, or a monogram. A trade mark does not express the brand in itself; it is just a symbol.<sup>30</sup>

If this happens, marketers realize a paradox in the fact that the symbol also stands for all the other values a brand has. This can lead to the situation where different individuals create their own versions of a brand. It is in this private context that a brand can be seen as a “one-night stand” or can become a “partner” to the individual, especially when the brand has a major role for the individual’s identity, self-fulfillment, and self-image, which might be seen as the ultimate expression of the *Gestalt* of the personality.

Against this background, sensory marketing from a brand perspective is to be looked upon as dominated by service, when most brands intend to offer their customers experiences. This assumption is in accordance with the service-dominant logic many researchers think marketing is going to be dominated by.<sup>31</sup>

The customer’s sensory experiences can lead to what we call “the experience logic.” This logic posits the individual’s personal and subjective interpretation and understanding

“ It is through the human senses that a customer can differentiate one brand from similar brands ”

of a sensory experience, which is the only true logic in the binary society. The experience logic contributes to forming behavioral, emotional, cognitive, relational, or symbolic values that often can replace the only functional values goods or a service might offer. In this sense, the experience logic combines emotional and rational elements in the human brain to facilitate the sensory experience of a brand.

In an era characterized by information overload and lack of time, emotional, cognitive, or symbolic values become more and more valuable in marketing. For many individuals it is no longer possible or even meaningful carefully to evaluate different products when many products seem almost identical at a first comparison. When competitors copy each others' product concepts, the comparison becomes even more difficult. This is typical for many retail chains, which face difficulties in differentiating themselves from their competitors if price is the only competitive weapon.

It also means that the possibilities for differentiation among products and brands become smaller and smaller, which affects the individual's options when making a choice. In the human cognitive system the brain acts as a filter to take away all the information that is irrelevant. It is through the five human senses that data arrive in the human brain from the environment and are compared with earlier experiences for categorization. Our brain continues by providing content and meaning for an individual to discover important differences.

By understanding the experience logic, a firm can use a sensory marketing approach, with the aim of attracting the five human senses and providing sensory experiences. It is through this process that the *Gestalt* can be shaped and developed in a more private way for the individual. The ultimate goal for the individual's sensory experience will then be to contribute to identity formation, self-fulfillment, and self-image. This makes the sensory experience in itself a service to customers.

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## MARKETING 3.0

This chapter presents the change forces of the third wave that affect marketing at the beginning of the twenty-first century. In particular, the importance of the modern and post-modern value systems in what is called the “binary society” is emphasized. Finally, the roles of aesthetics, emotions, and experiences in sensory marketing are discussed.

### SHIFTING DYNAMICS – THE EMBRYO OF THE BINARY SOCIETY

Marketing as a social process is constantly buffeted by different cultural, economic, political, and technological change forces. These forces create new conditions for the production and consumption of firms and individuals when marketing becomes dynamic, creative, and changeable in character.

At any given time in every society, different change processes characterize ongoing societal development with respect to the economy, culture, and everyday life. These processes make it possible, on the one hand, to explain what is happening and, on the other, to anticipate what will happen in the future.

**“ Marketers must understand the importance of culture and zeitgeist in the society ”**

To explain the increasing interest in sensory marketing we now discuss some of the change forces that affect marketing at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

In the middle of the twentieth century the development of society was analyzed in terms of societal waves acting through different economic, social, and technological change processes. The discussion spoke of the “first wave” and the “second wave,” and it was suggested that a “third wave” was on its way to replace modern industrial society via different change forces.<sup>1</sup>

The “first wave” referred to the development of the agricultural society. This wave ended when the Industrial Revolution started in the middle of the nineteenth century. The creation of modern industrial society and the modernization of society constituted the “second wave,” which reached its peak during the 1960s and 1970s in most Western countries, including the United States.

In the past three to four decades, post-modernization, as a change process, has influenced the development of modern industrial society in the West. This process is characterized primarily by an ongoing cultural value shift that emphasizes emerging and established human values with respect to family, economics, business, politics, religion, and relationships. Generations born in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s have increasingly questioned modern values and replaced them with post-modern values in working life and in everyday life.<sup>2</sup>

The Swedish researcher Bo Dahlbom posits that new information and communication technology – that is, digital technology – is another important change force.<sup>3</sup> He claims that technology has a constant impact on societal dimensions such as work, trade, communication, knowledge, and organization. This impact is felt through technologically driven processes, including automation, globalization, commercialization, rationalization, and systemization. Digital technology affects and directs the development of society in a number of important areas, giving marketing new conditions for change.

We believe that the post-modernization of modern industrial society illustrates the “third wave” in the development of contemporary society. This wave is characterized not only by the ongoing cultural value shift but also by digital technology as bases for another state of society. We call this state of society the “binary society,” which can be seen as another name for the embryo of the society of tomorrow.<sup>4</sup>

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The third wave is here in terms of the binary society

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The binary society is characterized by globalization, diversity, and pluralism of ideas, knowledge, and brands. At the same time, emotional and rational elements are combined in firms as well as individuals through the modern and post-modern value systems. This is why the binary society is often considered contradictory and paradoxical in its content and meaning.



## MODERN AND POST-MODERN VALUE SYSTEMS

The most noticeable effect of post-modernization, through the cultural value shift and digital technology, is the globalization of capital, labor, trade, and brands. It is increasingly common for the production facilities of firms to be transferred to low-cost countries; manpower in domestic production is decreasing, and the service sector continues to grow. Moreover, the development of digital technology influences the conditions of work life and everyday life for firms and individuals.<sup>5</sup>

This has resulted in mass production being increasingly replaced by mass customization, where digital technology has made it possible to divide volume production output into one or more products and different price alternatives. The American computer supplier Dell is a well-known example of how digital technology has been used backward to suppliers and forward to customers.



**Knowledge, symbols,  
and values are  
important production  
factors**



The most valuable production factor in the binary society seems to be knowledge of everything from culture, data, facts, and symbols to values. Hultén expresses this as follows:

In addition, intangible assets such as brands, know-how, or patents, which are built upon knowledge, are more important for a firm's long-term survival than classic production factors such as land, labor, capital, and raw material.<sup>6</sup>

In the hyper-competition that characterizes many consumer markets with global players it becomes increasingly important to develop new competitive advantages for many products and brands. It has become more necessary than ever before for a firm to try to satisfy the customer's individual needs and wants in order to be successful, not least in the service sector.

This challenge has created a business opportunity for many firms, particularly because the culture and everyday life of society in most Western countries are based on variation and disorder. It provides possibilities for and allows new identities, perspectives, and experiences for many people that crucially affect marketing strategy and tactics.

In everyday life questions about welfare and quality of life have come into focus, with the result that society praises and supports diversity and differences among people. Another prominent feature is the denial that there is only one possible truth, which also simplifies the growth of new ideas and attitudes. For this reason, many people have an innate reluctance to accept control or manipulation by doctrines, social norms, or religions.

Another important feature of contemporary culture is the emphasis on design and style rather than content and substance. Reality, humor, and visual surprises are mixed in entirely new ways. Each individual is provided opportunities to create new images of the self and experiences, real or virtual, twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week – 24/7. Added to this is the possibility to construct a continuously changing identity around the clock while satisfying the needs of consumption and enjoyment through shopping or surfing the Net.

“ Design and style as well as humor and visual surprises are important features of contemporary culture ”

The two value systems – the modern and the post-modern – confront firms in the binary society through factors such as human beings and everyday life, facts and knowledge, culture and values, behavior and demography, economy and globalization, and markets and technology (Table 2.1).

TABLE 2.1 The marketing environment in the binary society

Factors and attributes	Modern value system	Post-modern value system
<i>Human beings and everyday life</i>	Custom and tradition	Paradoxical and unsafe
	Production as main task	Consumption as main task
	Work most important	Leisure most important
	Social local context	Formal institutional context
<i>Facts and knowledge</i>	Positivism and science	Subjectivity and knowledge
	Objective generalizations	Biased realities
	A “real” world	A “symbolic” world
	One possible truth	Diversity of knowledge

(Continued)

TABLE 2.1 (Continued)

<i>Culture and values</i>	Human as object	Human as subject
	Collective meanings	Individual narratives
	Materialist values	Non-materialist values
	Universal outlook	Personal outlook
<i>Behavior and demography</i>	Nuclear family	Pluralism in living
	Rising birth rate	Declining birth rate
	Limited time	Unlimited time
	Unskilled consumption	Skilled consumption
<i>Economy and globalization</i>	Domestic competition	Global competition
	Goods manufacturing	Service production
	Manual labor	Knowledge workforce
	Industrial economy	Learning economy
<i>Markets and technology</i>	Mass markets	Fragmented niche markets
	Manufacturing and distribution	Experiences and personalization
	Consumers as consumers	Consumers as co-opters
	Uniformity and homogeneity	Diversity and freedom of choice

Source: B. Hultén, N. Broweus, and M. van Dijk, *Sinnesmarknadsföring* (Malmö: Liber AB, 2008).

In the binary society many people have moved from a strong belief in authority to increased individualization, which emphasizes self-expression and quality of life.<sup>7</sup> If a collectivist view was more dominant in modern industrial society, an individualist view is now more prominent. Finally, it has to be said that the binary society also has artistic attributes, such as intuition, creativity, spontaneity, speculation, and emotion.<sup>8</sup>

## INDIVIDUALIZATION AS LIFESTYLE

Most people, through their consumption of products and brands, can form new identities and self-images, which is why individualization as lifestyle is a clear expression of the present era and culture of society. A great number of individuals



**In the binary society consumers are emotional and rational and sovereign at the same time**



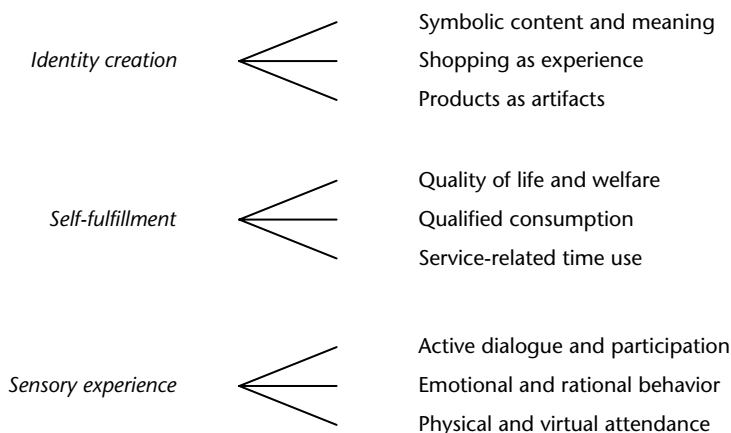


FIGURE 2.1 **Individualization as lifestyle**

Source: B. Hultén, N. Broweus, and M. van Dijk, *Sinnesmarknadsföring* (Malmö: Liber AB, 2008).

are for that reason looking “to maximize the worth of their existence to themselves through personalized acts of choice in a world of goods and services.”<sup>9</sup>

Individualization as lifestyle is characterized by three personal driving forces, represented by identity creation, self-fulfillment, and sensory experience (Figure 2.1). Shopping and consumption of different goods and services contribute to *identity creation*, which makes it possible for an individual to form him or herself and build an image of the self. Consumption has more and more symbolic content and is transformed into the production of images and pictures of the self, which implies that these images and pictures can often be changed and fragmented. This results in diversity and freedom of choice for individuals and offers possibilities for creating new identities and roles.<sup>10</sup>

“ Identity creation builds upon shopping and increased consumption ”

A common opinion is that identity creation deals with how to become something other than the person one really is. This might mean moving from a weak picture of the self by wearing expensive brand sweaters to appear successful and create another self-image. To become somebody often means defining who one is when meeting

other people. For this reason identity often deals with how to draw a boundary between the self and the environment, so that the “others” are those an individual is distinguished from.

However, many individuals want to belong to the collective and at the same time be unique. In this regard brands play a crucial role and offer the possibility of creating an identity that can be transferred to others via certain brands. Thus, identity creation can be seen as a lifestyle expressed through the image an individual builds up.<sup>11</sup>

In this image-building context factors such as aesthetics, culture, symbols, and language, together with the events of everyday life, are the most obvious elements.<sup>12</sup> This speaks to the importance of aesthetics, the emotions, and the senses in a sensory marketing framework.

*Self-fulfillment* is apparent through changing purchasing patterns in different areas of goods and services. This is especially true of the transition to increasingly qualified purchasing and consumption in areas such as health and medical care, cultural services, recreation, and education, where the trend has been conspicuous during the past decade.

“ Qualified consumption and changing time use focus on self-fulfillment ”

A clear example is the change from fast food to health-related goods and services, where the post-modern values surrounding quality of life and welfare have had a significant impact on behavior. In addition, the purchase of services is changing from “low-value” to “high-value” activities, where “low” and “high” express personal value and the individual’s experience.<sup>13</sup>

In addition, service-related time use emphasizes the self and self-fulfillment. Here the transition from work to increased leisure time is noteworthy. This transition allows space for a higher degree of individualization through service-related consumption. This clearly illustrates a more individualistic view than in modern times, when working hours were a sacred cow for many people. Nowadays more time is spent on leisure activities such as visiting friends, a shop in the mall, or a downtown restaurant. The transition is also expressed through increased time for watching television, surfing the Net, or pursuing personal care such as relaxation, fitness training, or intellectual reading.

*Sensory experience* as an expression of individualization is dependent on rational and emotional factors. The main reason is that shopping and buying are managed by an individual’s ambition for identity and self-fulfillment. Individuals in the binary society are therefore

active, participative, and creative in fulfilling themselves.<sup>14</sup> This is demonstrated by the fact that most brands are no longer just goods or services in terms of physical and functional meaning because they should fit in into an individual's private and social context.

In this way there is increased scope to use different goods and services to create experiences for many people. When the sensory experience is in focus, the product itself is no longer the ultimate goal of the individual. Products instead become "artifacts around which customers have experiences."<sup>15</sup> This is illustrated by the case of food, where the products have developed from simple provisions for "cooking" to become "sensory experiences." Similarly, with laptops, computers have moved from being "technical devices" to be seen as "mobile lifestyle entertainment."

Individualization as lifestyle might be seen as a symbolic action built upon shopping and consumption, which for most individuals is strongly connected to the self, happiness, and well-being. In this context sensory marketing plays a key role in how a firm or a brand is perceived and experienced by an individual with regard to sensory experiences.



**A product contributes to the formation of a sensory experience**



## FROM PRODUCT TO SENSORY EXPERIENCE

### The effects of glocalization

Marketing 3.0, through the third wave, is primarily characterized by ongoing globalization, with harsh and increased competition among brands in nearly all consumer markets around the world. Compared with earlier decades this situation creates new and different requirements for developing and strengthening a firm's strategic marketing.

In the wake of globalization there are two opposite but

also connected societal phenomena: on the one hand, homogenization, or standardization, and, on the other hand, heterogenization, or



**Marketing 3.0 works round the clock, year-round, and bombards our lives everywhere**



differentiation, of society, firms, and individuals. The combination of these two phenomena is called “glocalization,” which indicates that globalization and localization are taking place at the same time.

Individuals as customers are under constant pressure from increasing glocalization through such forces as culture, economy, and technology. It is nearly impossible for anyone to be unaffected by these forces. It is also more common for marketing to be seen as our elixir of life; we are constantly told to shop and consume in order to satisfy our needs for delight and satisfaction. Some researchers also claim that the main purpose of marketing is to point out our dissatisfaction with ourselves, which might result in constant shopping and consumption behavior.<sup>16</sup>

Customers are constantly exposed to brands through price campaigns, advertisements with superstars, TV commercials, and text messages. To a great extent this exposure has been made possible by digital technology as a primary change force, mainly through the Internet and mobile telephone communication. Technology allows a higher degree of freedom of choice and simplifies work life and everyday life by making things simpler, faster, and more exciting. But the result is a new “on-and-off” behavior, especially among younger generations, who might switch technology on or off during the day.<sup>17</sup>

An excellent example of the importance of digital technology is Apple’s iPhone, which was introduced to hysteria and long queues in the United States in June 2007. Despite the fact that most of the technology was untested, the possibility of combining a mobile phone, Internet access, a camera, an mp3 player, and video was enough for many of the customers. It is noteworthy that Apple chose to use a touch screen instead of a traditional keyboard, in order to emphasize the importance of touch as one of the five human senses.

This also illustrates the transition from a more traditional marketing, where the focus is still on the product’s attributes and features as well as branding, to look instead at the product as an experience.<sup>18</sup> Branding is no longer about only market share for a firm; it is also about “mind and heart share,” which is at the center of a sensory marketing framework.

For this reason it will become more important for many firms to be smelled, to be heard, to be seen, to be tasted, or to be touched in order to be present in the product competition that constantly surrounds customers. This point is underlined by the fact that many customers are now more demanding and want to reach self-fulfillment through

different products, show their lifestyle, and express their uniqueness. The customer's attraction to a firm might therefore be greater for firms seeking "mind and heart share" rather than traditional market share.

Sensory marketing, with its emphasis on creating and facilitating an individual's supreme sensory experience, is to be seen as a way to satisfy the customer's mind and heart in marketing strategy and tactics.

### **Aesthetics, emotions, and experiences**

The customer orientation that has characterized marketing in B2B (business to business) and B2C (business to consumers) frameworks during recent decades must, in our view, be further deepened and refined in the future. This is clearly necessary if a firm's strategic marketing is going to be continuously successful short term as well as long term.

The researchers Leonard Lodish and Carl Mela claim in an article in *Harvard Business Online* that many brands are getting weaker as a result of firms thinking more short term than long term.<sup>19</sup> Their research also shows that there is too big an investment in price as a competitive edge and not enough investment in advertising, product development, or distribution solutions. One way to solve this problem is to think more long term and to find new methods of communicating a brand to customers.

Most firms want to have successful and sustainable brands, no matter whether they are consumer goods or a professional service. Many brands are formed in the minds of customers through the mental conceptions – that is, the mental images – that come from experiences. Thus, branding is about the customer's conceptions, emotions, and experiences of a product or a brand and nothing else.<sup>20</sup>

“ Emotional and aesthetic aspects are becoming more and more important for the experience of a brand ”

At the same time, it has become more difficult for firms to differentiate brands using traditional methods and approaches that keep step with the product competition that has emerged with glocalization. This challenge has been recognized by researchers including Morris Holbrook, Bernd Schmitt and Alex Simonson, Marc Gobé, and Martin



Lindstrom.<sup>21</sup> Schmitt, Gobé, and Lindstrom have suggested a marketing framework with a focus on the human senses as a possible way for firms to strengthen their brands. Moreover, Schmitt and Simonson claim that it is no longer enough for firms to satisfy only the customer's functional needs. Rather, it is also necessary for a firm to satisfy aesthetic, emotional, and sensorial needs to involve customers:

In this world of heavy communications flow through a large number of media vehicles, through interactive and sensory-laden multimedia, product attributes and benefits, brand names and brand associations are no longer sufficient to catch attention, to draw consumers. Businesses that engage consumers are those that afford them a memorable sensory experience that ties in with the positioning of the company, product, or service. For all these reasons, the branding phase is losing its vitality and is being replaced by the marketing of sensory experiences, i.e. by marketing aesthetics.<sup>22</sup>

Marketing aesthetics is often defined in terms of how different sensory experiences can contribute to a firm's brand identity and an individual's brand image. Among philosophers, it is a common opinion that objects can offer aesthetic satisfaction through symbols that remind an individual of pleasant and attractive things.

In the eighteenth century the German philosopher Alexander Baumgarten defined the term "aesthetics" as the experience of something through emotions and feelings. At that time the interpretation was that aesthetics as a philosophical direction should be able to produce some kind of sense knowledge – as opposed to logic, which emphasized truth.

In *Gestalt* psychology it is commonly held that color and form have a direct impact on an individual's perception ability, even if there is no concurrent conscious thinking. The holistic nature of perception is one of the central tenets of *Gestalt* psychology, and it is assumed that the whole – or the *Gestalt* – is greater than the sum of the parts.

In connection with experience-based purchase and use, the holistic perspective is emphasized in terms of different functional and aesthetic elements in a firm's sensory marketing. All these elements

“

In experience-based consumption the five human senses are stimulated to offer a holistic experience

”

stimulate the five human senses to create a holistic experience. One firm that has succeeded in facilitating a holistic experience of the home is the Swedish retail chain IKEA. In this case, the bathroom and the kitchen, for example, are taken as points of departure for how functional and aesthetic elements can fit together and facilitate an individual's holistic experience.

It is also assumed that the aesthetics of marketing can contribute in different ways to strengthening and developing brand relationships through increased loyalty, higher prices, the resistance of information overload and competitors' actions, and the creation of long-term relationships.<sup>23</sup> For this reason new emotional and experience-based elements are required, which is what concepts such as aesthetics and customer experience focus on. These concepts emphasize questions associated with the emotional and affective aspects of a brand.

Bernd Schmitt suggests that marketers should use five different types of customer experiences as a basis for experience marketing.<sup>24</sup> The five types of customer experiences are *sense*, *feel*, *think*, *act*, and *relate*. Each of these experiences can be applied in marketing campaigns. Schmitt also discusses three strategic goals with respect to the human senses and posits the senses as *differentiators*, *stimulators*, and *value creators*. This creates an opportunity for a firm to distinguish itself in a strategic way from its competitors and to establish brand awareness and build brand image that is experience-based and no longer only goods- or service-based.

Among researchers a common opinion is that the emotional aspect is crucial for consumers' final choice of a brand and what they are willing to pay. Here, "emotional" means how a brand can engage consumers with regard to the involvement of the senses and feelings. Moreover, it is suggested that emotional branding should be the most important point of departure to create a dialogue with consumers that is based on physical satisfaction as well as emotional experiences.<sup>25</sup>

## THE BRAND AND SENSORY MARKETING

During the 1990s the focus of the marketing literature shifted from product attributes and product features to branding, that is, brand building.<sup>26</sup> It is commonly held today that branding concerns only a minor part of an offering in respect of a firm's opportunities to form its identity and create a brand image.

This is clearly demonstrated by the concept of corporate social responsibility (CSR), with its emphasis on issues relating to child labor, ethics, environmental sustainability, and fair trade. In this respect it is natural that aesthetic and mostly emotional elements are of significance in the individual's experience of a brand.

Researcher Marc Gobé claims that this lays the ground for what could be called a "consumer democracy," where the opinions of customers concerning a firm's ethics and social responsibility play a crucial role.<sup>27</sup> One example is American customers' reaction to Nike in 1999, when the firm's brand image was weakened by the fact that child labor was being used in production factories abroad.

To this we can add that individuals' lifestyles, self-images, and social contexts reinforce the importance of emotional and value-based elements in a remarkable way. Customers ask questions such as "Who buys the product?" "What does the product look like?" "Who produces and sells it?" The answers to these questions relate to confidence and trust in a brand rather than to a judgment of its functional attributes and features.<sup>28</sup>

There are many reasons why aesthetics, emotions, and experiences have assumed greater significance in marketing. As already mentioned, glocalization has played a major role, further reinforcing the brand power that already exists. Add to this the growth of digital technology and new media, and the implication is that dominant brands will be even more powerful at both global and local levels.

However, this also opens up opportunities for new products to become brands in the future if they are marketed in creative and innovative ways. One requirement is that the new products create different associations and experiences than established brands, which can result in their having a special image among customers. Emphasizing the human senses in this context might offer opportunities to create competitive advantages of an emotional and value-based character.

Increased brand competition in the marketplace makes it more difficult for a firm to succeed with traditional branding, especially because most firms lack the power to influence the customer's behavior and image. However, digital technology, with its endless possibilities of variation, makes it possible for a firm to offer customers new combinations of scents, sounds, pictures, tastes, and textures. This is an example of what sensory marketing is in practice.

We believe that in the global competition no firm should neglect the five human senses in marketing. The main argument is that a

carefully chosen sensorial strategy can contribute to establishing the differences that allow customers to have a preference for a particular brand. In relation to commodities, this is more important when generic competition relates to product attributes and product features such as price rather than anything else.

Thus, sensory marketing is being discussed among researchers as a way to facilitate sensory experiences of a firm through the five human senses.<sup>29</sup> It requires a better understanding of how a firm can facilitate a sense impact in marketing practice.

For us, sensory marketing means a firm's ability to accomplish a supreme sensory experience with a strategic direction, attracting as many of the human senses as possible. That a firm facilitates an experience is not a new idea, but in our view that experience should be deepened and more strongly focused on the five human senses. Often mass marketing is criticized for being too general, standardized, and stereotyped in, for example, advertising. There is a need for other dimensions.

The main difference between an experience and a sensory experience is a brand's ability to penetrate the inner core of customers. A supreme sensory experience is a decomposition of an experience whereby a firm's marketing activities are absorbed via the individual's five senses. To maximize impact, the senses should be attracted and should be at the center of sensory marketing.

When one sense stimulates another it is called sensory interplay, or the analogy of senses. This is a neurological condition whereby two or more senses are connected or linked together. In this regard the senses contribute to synergies that often give customers a deeper holistic experience.

The following example clearly demonstrates how one customer uses the five senses in shopping.



**A sensory experience should be deepened and more strongly focused on the five human senses**



### **Johanna's Shopping Experience**

As Johanna went around the stores, she used all five senses. Some senses were used more than others, and some had a stronger effect than others. When we visited the food retailer ICA Ahold, Johanna

chose a specific variety of tomatoes; when I asked her why she had taken these, she said that the other type had a bad smell.... In fact, the "other" tomatoes were on the stalk and smelled bad, which is why Johanna took tomatoes without a stalk....

Smells are strongly connected to memory, which I noticed when Johanna experienced the smell of a horse as we entered a shoe store. It was obvious that Johanna associated the smell with a memory experience and became very happy. Her experience in the store became very positive....

In all the stores the senses of sight and touch were of greatest importance. Clothes and food were examined using both the eyes and touch. Bread was "tasted" with a touch of the fingers: Does it feel hard? Does it taste dry? Sweaters in the colors Johanna liked were also examined using the fingers.

Sight stimulates a customer's purchase behavior in many ways. I noticed this especially when we went down to H & M's, where everything was dark and the sweaters were thrown on the shelves. Johanna wanted to leave the store immediately.... Another example of the impact of stimuli occurred when Gina Tricot played music by The Ark, which created a very positive attraction for Johanna. She thought it was worth going into the store even though she actually didn't like the store....

In another store all the senses were mixed together and flew together as a whole. This meant that Johanna thought the store was cozy and that it was worth taking time to stay a while.

As researchers we have raised the question "Why do firms focus on the human senses in marketing at the beginning of the twenty-first century?" This question has guided our research into the human senses and runs as the main thread throughout this book.

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## THE SMELL SENSE

*Our search for pleasure and daily well-being is most often led by our nose*

This chapter argues for the importance of scents for firms as well as individuals. A number of different sense expressions are presented through which a smell experience can be accomplished. In addition, the meaning of scents for employees' environment and health is discussed. Finally, Hotel Park Hyatt Vendôme in France is presented as an example of the brand as a smell experience.

### TO SNIFF OUT A GOOD DEAL

#### Love is in the air

The Advertising Association of Sweden, together with the Swedish business magazine *Dagens Industri Weekend*, predicted the strongest business trends in 2007.<sup>1</sup> They forecast that air, ventilation, and scents would witness the year's most massive exploitation and become big business areas in the future. This is because more firms have become aware of the fact that customers' well-being and sensory experience depend largely on the environment in which they live.

Among U.S. scent experts, the general opinion is that using scents is the best way to achieve a sensory experience. This practice is becoming more widespread; for example, retail chains and service producers use scents to create a smell experience for customers in a particular place or setting.<sup>2</sup> In some situations it has even been shown that profits have increased by up to 40 percent after applying scents.<sup>3</sup>

As firms are paying attention to the positive effects of scents in marketing, the air care market is increasing. Scented candles, sachets



of coffee and tea, potpourri, oils, and scented resins remain popular, but there are also numerous new products on the market today. Fragranced products such as sprays, gels, liquids, and electric fresheners for cars and houses, for example, are in increasing demand. Euromonitor forecasts that the global market for air care products will reach \$7.2 billion by 2010. In the United States alone the market is expected to reach \$2.8 billion.<sup>4</sup>

In sensory marketing scents can be applied in many different ways and with several aims. They can be used as marketing tactics to advertise a product and in strategic marketing to differentiate, position, and strengthen a brand and its image.

“ Scents contribute to the expression of a brand’s identity and strengthen its image ”

One example of the importance of scents in a service landscape can be taken from a grocery store in Stockholm, Sweden. For a limited period, an artificial scent of oranges was used in the fruits and vegetables section, which led to a noticeable increase in the sale of oranges.

One example of scents being used in a strategic way is the American retail chain Bloomingdale’s. The company, which is often associated with style and innovation, uses carefully selected scents in its departments to achieve a smell experience for customers. The purpose is to strengthen the brand image in the long term.

Thus, scents can be an important component of a firm’s sensory marketing, because scents have a close connection to our memory and well-being. This fact is central to any understanding of scents in marketing and their potential for creating a sensory experience.

### **The nose remembers 10,000 scents**

For a long time, of all the human senses, least was known about the smell sense. However, thanks to the 2004 Nobel Prize winners in Physiology or Medicine, Richard Axel and Linda Buck, we now have more knowledge of how the smell sense can distinguish – and remember – more than 10,000 scents. Their study of the function and organization of the smell sense represented great scientific progress, to a large extent because the smell sense is important for humans’ experiences, memories, and well-being.

The fact that scientific research into the smell sense is progressing is important for those firms that are interested in what scents can do for business.

“ Scents can affect people’s mood and feelings in a positive way ”

In addition, a global study shows that 80 percent of men and 90 percent of women associate a particular scent with specific memories and experiences.<sup>5</sup> Just a hint of a previously experienced scent can be enough to awaken this association. It is not even necessary for people to be conscious of the scent when it is registered in their mind for the first time.<sup>6</sup> This knowledge provides greater incentive to apply scents in marketing.

Thus, scents are important for our mood and our mind. For example, aromatherapy uses scents to eliminate stress and anxiety and to give harmony and balance to the soul of the individual. Use of aromatherapy products such as scented candles has increased by about 10–15 percent per year since the beginning of the 1990s.<sup>7</sup> Our search for pleasure and daily well-being is most often led by our nose.

The smell sense is the most direct sense because there is essentially no transformation of the signal – the scent – on the way to the brain. It is therefore hard to distort a smell experience, because it influences without the possibility of correction or transformation.

Figure 3.1 illustrates the odorant receptors and the organization of the smell, or olfactory, sense. The smell sense is located in the top of the nasal cavity, which is divided into three levels. During normal, calm breathing the air passes through the two lowest levels. Not until a person sniffs for a scent does the air pass through the third level. Then the scent molecules move closer to the olfactory receptors, which are located in the back of the nose, and the scent is more clearly perceived.

Humans have about a thousand different olfactory receptors. Each is specialized for particular scents. The olfactory receptor cells send electrical signals to glomeruli in the olfactory bulb – the brain’s area of smell. The signals are then routed to particular places in the brain. There the information is combined by different receptors to form a pattern that is characteristic of a specific scent. This is why it is possible to be aware of the smell experience of a flower in the early summer and recall the scent later.

Each scent is a combination of several scent molecules, and a large number of different combinations of scents can be perceived and

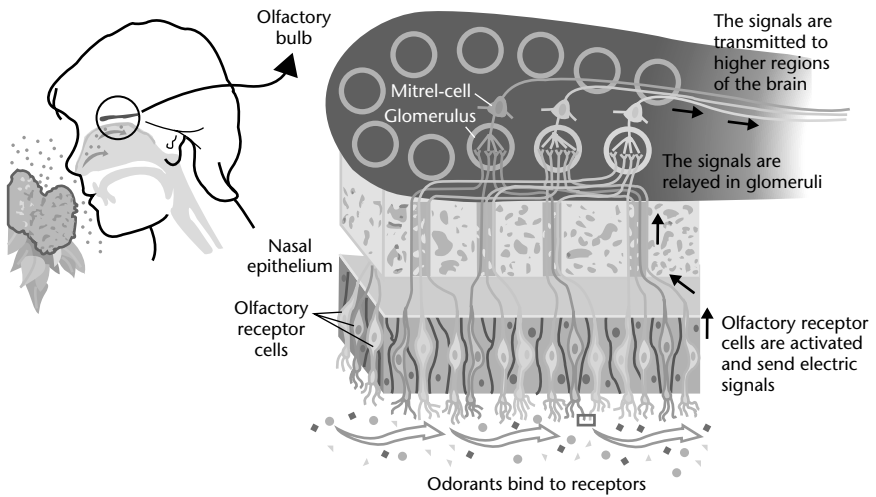


FIGURE 3.1 **The organization of the smell sense**

Source: Bild & Form Jonny Hallberg.

recalled. In the same way that letters build up words, a combination of receptors creates scents.

People's memories and smell experiences also depend on their generation. People born in the first half of the twentieth century generally associate natural scents such as those of trees or flowers with their childhood, whereas younger generations more often associate chemical scents with their childhood. It might be that children born in the first half of the century played mainly with natural toys, whereas those born in the second half had access to artificial toys such as Play-Doh. Such knowledge can be useful for firms that target specific age groups, not least because scents associated with childhood are often seen as the most emotive.<sup>8</sup>

### The silent sense

All kinds of scents are by nature a part of people's everyday life. There is no question that natural as well as artificial scents contribute to the well-being of many people. As early as 1922 one of the first perfumes was fabricated – the world-famous Chanel No. 5, which Marilyn Monroe asserted was the only thing she wore in bed.

The fact that scents affect us deeply, enhance our well-being, and are associated with something indefinable and transcendental might explain why it is difficult to describe them using words. The smell sense is called the “silent sense.” Despite the difficulties of describing scents verbally, many people express themselves using scents.

People have for a long time used scents to express their identity and tell others who they are. For instance, Greek mythology tells us that the god Dionysos applied scents to his feet because the birds alone would get enjoyment if he applied perfume only to his head.



Even in the ancient world people expressed an identity by applying a scent



Even today there are scents for the feet. A few years ago the brand Rexona of the Dutch multinational corporation Unilever introduced a deodorant to stop smelly feet. The expectation was that the deodorant would be used in daily life and become as natural to use as the deodorant people apply to their armpits.

The number of potential new perfumes is immeasurable. Every year thirty to forty new scents are introduced, at a cost of up to several billion dollars. All the biggest fashion houses offer scents for men and women. However, many people apply perfume not only to themselves. Scents are also used in houses – for example, scented candles and room scents – and there are even scents for pets, such as the perfumes for dogs and cats sold by the Belgian brand Oh My Dog, which offers “Fashion for pets.” These products can be found in retail stores in Europe, the United States, and Asia. Thus, scents are spreading to the surrounding environment, including the home, pets, and even the car.

All the big car producers are trying to make their cars smell good – and just right – to give them their own identity and improve the experience of driving and traveling. Furthermore, many customers are looking for a car with which to identify themselves – not just in terms of color, shape, and size but even in terms of scent. A study in the United States and Europe shows that 86 percent of Americans and 69 percent of Europeans think that the scent is important when buying a car.<sup>9</sup>



When people buy a car, the car’s scent has a major impact on the experience



The French car producer Citroën is well aware of what scents can do for both the car's identity and its image.

### Well-Being on Four Wheels

Citroën C4 customers can choose among nine different scents for the car's interior, including vanilla, lavender, citrus, and lotus flower. This choice is offered by Citroën because the scents create a good atmosphere, which also can lead to safer driving.

The scent lasts in the car for about six months. After that the customer gets a letter – a scented one, of course – with a message to visit the Citroën reseller to buy new scent packages.

To harmonize the scents with the brand's identity, they are produced with the help of scent experts from the MAESA creative beauty group.

This is clearly a sensorial smell strategy on the part of Citroën.

This example indicates that scents are seen as an almost expected part of the car, just like the rest of the interior. Similarly, the German car producer Audi is considered one of the leaders in the car industry regarding the use of scents to stimulate customers' smell sense. A team of five people is working to achieve the right smell in the car's interior, including the leather.<sup>10</sup>

The market for air care products for cars is growing. Many firms offer customers a choice of services to make cars smell good, so clearly there are more ways to get a good scent in the car than just adding a Wunderbaum.

However, it is not only in cars and service landscapes that scents can be used in favorable ways. In traditional media such as newspapers and magazines, scent strips made of microscopic scent-filled balls exude smells to the reader. The exclusive Italian brand Giorgio Armani has long used scent strips in its newspaper and magazine advertising. Today, more or less every fashion magazine gives its readers the chance to smell perfumes or try samples of skin care products.

It is commonly believed that scents have a positive effect on advertising in print media.



Newspaper readers react positively to an advertisement that smells good



A study by the Dutch firm Senta Aromatic Marketing shows that 84 percent of newspaper readers react to a scented advertisement, which increases their interest in buying the product.<sup>11</sup> Thus, it is possible to apply scents in mass marketing. Consistent marketing use of scents in print media can therefore increase awareness of a brand.

The New York magazine *Visionaire* has taken scents in print media to another level. In its “scent issue” the reader is given the opportunity to experience twenty-one different scents.

### Browse among Scents

*Visionaire* differs from traditional printed magazines in terms of both style and content. The magazine looks like a leather purse, with scents presented in designed glass bottles.

The impression of exclusivity is conveyed in the elegant arrangement of the bottles. Each scent is characterized and illustrated with pictures. Making the identification of the scent easier and associating the scent with more sense expressions can make the reader’s sensory experience stronger.

*Visionaire* also gives a feeling of exclusivity by producing the magazine in a limited edition. It is associated with luxury, and the individual reader is expressing his or her identity in an intellectual and aesthetic context, not just through clothes, accessories, or makeup.

## SCENT AS EXPERIENCE TRIGGER

Marketing is dominated by visual expressions. Nevertheless, a major portion of the emotional impressions customers encounter in their daily life is realized through scent.<sup>12</sup> This provides firms with a good opportunity to express their identity and strengthen their image through the application of scents. Different sense expressions that can be used to create a smell experience are illustrated in Figure 3.2.

“ Scents give the individual new emotional and personal values ”

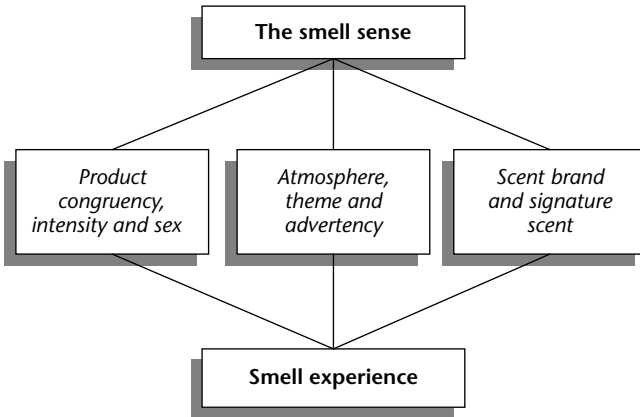


FIGURE 3.2 **Sense expressions and the smell experience**

Source: B. Hultén, N. Broweus, and M. van Dijk, *Sinnesmarknadsföring* (Malmö: Liber AB, 2008).

### Product congruency, intensity, and sex

The *product congruency* of a scent is a prominent sense expression in a smell experience, according to a study reported in 2006 in the scientific magazine *Journal of Marketing*.<sup>13</sup> Product congruency as a sense expression refers to how naturally a scent is associated with a product – like an orange smells like orange and not carrot. Scents that are product congruent are believed to improve customers’ opinion of a product and make them act more flexibly and seek greater variety.<sup>14</sup> The use of product-congruent scents in the service landscape is of significance despite the difficulties associated with determining what is product congruent and what is not in this context.

The British shirt maker Thomas Pink, owned by the French luxury goods group LVMH, uses the smell of newly washed clothes as a product-congruent scent. Another example is the American company Jordan’s Furniture, which used the scent of trees in its stores to make clear the natural association between

“ The customer’s sensory experience is controlled by scents at the moment of purchasing ”

furniture and different tree species. As a result, the company's sales increased.<sup>15</sup>

*Intensity* as a sense expression, which refers to whether a scent is distinct or subtle, can affect the opportunity to accomplish a positive smell experience. A subtle scent that is weakly perceived can have a subliminal impact on customers, as shown in the following example.<sup>16</sup>

### **Subtle Scents Have a Strong Influence**

In a study two identical pairs of Nike shoes were placed in two different, but identical, rooms. There was only one difference between the rooms: In one a subtle scent of flowers was added. It was shown that 84 percent of the participants preferred the shoes in the scented room – even at a higher price than the other pair of shoes – because the shoes in the scented room were perceived as more expensive.

Customers' emotional state and mood also influence how they are affected by scents. A good mood enables a more positive smell experience, especially when the scent has a high degree of product congruency.<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, firms must be aware that scents can be used as an expression for *sex*. That is to say, a scent can be feminine or masculine, as women and men perceive scents in different ways. Women are more sensitive than men to some scents and have a better capacity to identify scents.

Thus, a firm can find it beneficial to apply scents that accord with a feminine or a masculine target group. Such "sex-congruent" scents can be used strategically to attract women or men when the target group is clearly of that sex. In women's and men's clothing stores, femininity and masculinity must be taken into consideration when choosing a scent, not just the traditional character of clothes. The women's and men's departments are often clearly separated, so there are good opportunities to add particular scents to facilitate a different smell experience for each sex.

The following example from a clothes shop illustrates scents as an expression for femininity and masculinity.<sup>18</sup>



### Scents As Femininity and Masculinity

A scent of vanilla was added to the women's department and a spicy kind of honey scent to the men's department. The scents had a major impact on the customers – the sales almost doubled in both the women's department and men's department. However, when the scents were switched between the two departments, the customers spent less money than average. Obviously women prefer the scent of vanilla, and men prefer the scent of honey.

It is clear that scents are perceived in different ways by women and by men, which affects their approach to consumption in the shop. Another study from North America shows that sex-congruent scents in a clothes shop affect women and men in a positive way.<sup>19</sup> In this study a scent of Rose Maroc symbolized the masculine and a scent of vanilla the feminine. Once Rose Maroc was added in the men's department and vanilla in the women's department, a pleasant smell experience was created for the customers, in contrast to when the scents were switched between the departments. The sex-congruent scents contributed to positive opinions about product price and quality and the formation of the service landscape. In addition, customers stayed longer in the shop, bought more products, and spent more money when the sex-congruent scents were presented. It should also be said that the scents strengthened customers' intentions to revisit the shop.

These studies demonstrate the importance of applying the right scent for the right occasion, since the right scent makes customers more willing to make new purchases and increases the time before a decision is made about buying a product, which increases the chance of a purchase.<sup>20</sup> For example, scents of vanilla and clementine have been shown to affect customers to the extent that they unconsciously stay longer in a shop.<sup>21</sup>

Because customers spend more the longer they stay in stores, it is obvious what scents can do for a firm's sales even in the short term. A firm should be aware that



**It is important to know  
how to match the  
right scent to the right  
occasion**



scents can affect customers in a positive way, provided care is taken regarding what kinds of scents are used and their intensity. Several studies show clearly the importance of scents for a sensory experience and the possibility of facilitating brand awareness and establishing a sustainable brand image.

### Atmosphere, theme, and advertency

It appears from our interviews as well as from previous research<sup>22</sup> that different kinds of scents are believed to contribute to a good *atmosphere* as a sense expression in a service landscape. Furthermore, scents in a service landscape can contribute to the customer's loyalty to a firm. This is shown by a study performed in a shopping centre in Amsterdam, in the Netherlands, in 1994, where scents made the customers more inclined to revisit the shopping centre and also to recommend it to others.<sup>23</sup>

“ Scents in the service landscape create well-being and a feeling that stays with the individual ”

Scents used in a service landscape can be either natural or artificial. The experience can be all about the scent of newly picked flowers or the artificial scent of spearmint spread by scent machines. Perhaps the classic way to create an atmosphere in a service landscape is with the smell of freshly baked bread. The smell of freshly baked bread has been used in stores and supermarkets for a long time to affect customers' shopping behavior.

In the United Kingdom it was noticed in the 1980s that the smell of freshly baked bread led to the sale not only of more bread but also of other products.<sup>24</sup>

“ The smell of freshly baked bread is the classic example of how to affect the customer through scent ”

The brand ICA, owned by the Swedish company Hakon Invest AB and the Dutch company Royal Ahold NV, is applying scents in its stores to create a good atmosphere for its customers. ICA does not use artificial scents; instead, it places ovens strategically so that customers can smell the aroma of freshly

baked bread while they shop, as related by one employee at the head office:

We have real bakeries... We try to have ovens in the stores because it creates a good environment. Scent is really exciting... Memories are closely connected to scents and create strong associations in individuals.

The smell of bread is difficult to resist, and for many people it is associated with positive memories. Researchers have studied the mechanism behind bread's aging and its smell to try to describe why the smell of bread facilitates well-being. No definitive answer has been found, but there are theories that it is the transportation of the aroma between the crust and inside of the loaf that controls the process that leads to the good feeling associated with freshly baked bread. The aromaticum from the rusk emerges during baking, and the smell of the crumb rises while the dough proves. Many chains have in-store ovens where they are baking bread and letting it prove. It is important that the whole baking process take place in the store for the right atmosphere and smell experience to be achieved.

Firms can also apply scents as a sense expression for a *theme* to improve tactical marketing activities. Scents can be used to create *advertency* when, for example, a new product is being launched or other messages have to be communicated in a short time. This is illustrated by the following example from a cell phone store.<sup>25</sup>

### **A Theme of Chocolate**

Verizon Wireless used scents when it launched a new cell phone from the Korean company LG Electronics. The theme that surrounded the phone played on the phone's name, Chocolate. Scents of chocolate were used at the checkouts and at the showcases where the cell phones were presented.

The purpose was to create an identity for and sensory experience of the cell phone. Scents were applied as a complement to the visual expressions and sound expressions to improve the sensory experience.

It is said that one customer who was hesitating between Chocolate and another cell phone bought Chocolate because a salesperson

sprayed chocolate scent in the customer's vicinity. The launch was described by the firm as one of its most successful launches ever, although it is difficult to prove that the success was because of the scent.

In this example scent was used to increase sales and create advertency to a product. In addition, scents have a significant impact on the individual and on perceived product quality,<sup>26</sup> which is why scents can be an important element of a theme when a specific product is in focus. Nevertheless, we do not believe that this kind of tactical short-term use of scents strengthens the brand and its image in the long term. This requires a more strategic approach.

However, the use of scents as a short-term tactical marketing tool should not be neglected, as it can stimulate and contribute to a firm's creativity and knowledge of how scents can be applied. This allows a firm to get to know scents and to understand their impact on customers, employees, and brand image. The more knowledge and experience a firm builds up, the more it will move into using scents in a sensory marketing approach.

A firm should analyze the situations in which customers get in touch with scents. These can include spaces in a service landscape as well as lavatories, kitchens, and entrances. It is important that the smell experience of the brand is positive. The brand should create an environment that is inviting to customers.

### Scent brand and signature scent

A scent can be used as a registered trade mark, a so-called *scent brand*. This secures legally that the scent cannot be used by another firm, so the scent brand can be associated uniquely with a particular firm in the long term, in the same way as a visual logotype. In effect, this means that a firm that has a scent brand does not need a visual logotype. Thus, the two can be equated, although a scent brand might be perceived as more abstract.



A scent brand can be equated with a logotype as a symbol for a brand



The registration of a scent brand is not as easy as the registration of a firm's trade mark. A scent

brand has to be graphically represented and distinguishable from other trademarks. The reason is to avoid the subjectivity that might occur during identification and understanding of a scent brand. Moreover, a scent brand must communicate dissimilarities to other brands and products. One firm that has registered a scent brand is the Senta Aromatic Marketing.<sup>27</sup>

**Game, Scent, and Brand!**

Senta Aromatic Marketing made a trade mark registration of “the smell of fresh, cut grass” for tennis balls. This scent was accepted as characteristic and objective enough to make the accompanying description of the scent brand sufficient to be a graphic rendering.

All tennis balls look more or less the same, but Senta’s tennis balls differ from the majority because of their scent. However, it is not the specific scent that is unique in this case. It is rather that the scent itself facilitates the identification of the tennis ball. If other firms used scented tennis balls, it is likely they also would be associated with Senta, because Senta first scented tennis balls.

In Senta’s case the basic requirement of a graphic rendering was met by just a verbal description. However, this registration has been described as “a pearl in the desert, an isolated decision without any subsequent.”<sup>28</sup>

Firms whose products naturally contain scents have found that registering a scent brand is a complex process. For example, it is not possible for a coffee producer to register the smell of coffee, because it would not be possible to differentiate the trade mark from the product, as the smell is a natural part of the product.<sup>29</sup>

On the other hand, there are firms that have registered scents that have no natural association with their products. For example, the British tire producer Dunlop has registered the scent of rose. The graphic rendering was just a verbal description, which was accepted by the UK Patent Office.

What Dunlop has done is not strategic sensory marketing but a tactical action to differentiate and attract attention to the firm’s products in an innovative way. If this scent is not used frequently, it will not strengthen the brand and will not create a real smell experience for customers.

Before a scent brand is registered a firm should conduct thorough analyses and create strategies to make it part of the firm's sensory marketing, because the scent should communicate the values of the brand and should be used for a long time. In this way a scent brand is not flexible. Just as a firm seldom changes visual logotype, fonts, or colors, so a scent brand should not be changed often. A firm that has a scent brand should treat it as an important and permanent sense expression in sensory marketing.

Here we want to mention that firms in Sweden have the option, by so-called bedding-in, to secure sole rights to a trade mark even though a graphic rendering is missing.<sup>30</sup> This means that a firm can be the holder of a scent brand without a registered graphic rendering. In other words, a local corner shop could have a scented product that is actually a scent brand.

Even if a firm does not have a registered scent brand, there are good possibilities to associate scents with a brand. Scents can be used like the firm's signature to differentiate itself in the marketplace. Scents intended to be associated with a specific brand are called *signature scents*. Such scents are applied by firms that want to strengthen their identity and facilitate long-term recognition of the brand through a specific scent. Examples of companies using signature scents are the American retailer of women's wear, lingerie, and beauty products Victoria's Secret; the South Korean electronics company Samsung; and Westin Hotels, which is part of the American company Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide.

“ A signature scent gives customers new association contingencies ”

Westin applies the scent of white tea in its hotels around the world to express the lifestyle feeling of the brand. The scent is believed to emphasize the personality of the brand, and customers can buy the White Tea Collection by Westin, a package that includes scented candles, pot-pourri, and oils. In this way, customers can get a lasting smell experience of Westin Hotels. This is a good example of how a hotel can sell a feeling of the brand that the individual then carries away with him or her.

Signature scents should elucidate a brand's identity and, just like scent brands, be able to be associated with the brand in the same way as visual logotypes, colors, or fonts. However, signature scents do not need to be unique to a particular brand, though it can be a strength if they are. It is important to use signature scents in a strategic way.

In effect, a signature scent has the same purpose as a scent brand. However, because a signature scent does not need a graphic rendering, it is often easier to apply than a scent brand. In contrast to scent brands, signature scents are not legally protected and can therefore be used by any firm. Moreover, a signature scent is more flexible than a scent brand and can be used more variably, even though the signature scent ought to be used in the long term to enhance knowledge of a brand and simplify its identification.

It should be mentioned that the use of a signature scent is not straightforward. If the signature scent is artificial and unlike any other scent, for example, it might be difficult for customers to associate the scent with previous experiences, memories, and feelings. Thus, the scent might be perceived as anonymous. Customers are not likely to be in touch with the scent except during interaction with the specific brand, and therefore a scent like this will not be a natural part of the customer's daily life. On the other hand, an anonymous signature scent could be seen as a real challenge for a firm and an opportunity to position the scent as part of the customer's image of the brand.

If a firm instead applies a common scent that many people recognize, it might be easier for the brand to be present in the customer's mind twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week – 24/7. For instance, many customers certainly relate to the scent of chocolate or vanilla; these scents are already “registered” in their senses. Thus, it can be a good idea to use well-known scents as signature scents. This can be an effective method in an early phase of purchasing because it contributes to the customer's well-being. This might provide great opportunities to accomplish a sensory experience. However, it should also be mentioned that there are risks in applying well-known scents, as they are not perceived as unique to a particular firm; instead they are competing with other scent-related memories and experiences.

## SCENTS' DEPTH AND DIMENSIONS

### The brand's innermost feelings

The smell sense is closely connected to the part of the brain that handles the emotions, the right cerebral hemisphere, where scents arouse feelings and affect our emotions. Scents have the capacity to reach people consciously as well as unconsciously, before it is possible for us

to reflect on them. In this way scents are instant; it takes only a scent perception to activate our senses.<sup>31</sup> Moreover, scents can help us to remember, describe, and tell – elements that from many perspectives are important in sensory marketing.

Because people's feelings and sensory experiences are of great importance for firms in facilitating brand awareness and establishing a sustainable brand image, scents, with their emotional values, will be even more prominent in sensory marketing. As examples of the depth and dimensions of scents, we can mention that the scent of basil is stimulating and improves the memory; the scent of grapefruit is believed to be energizing; the scent of nutmeg improves self-esteem; the scents of sweet orange and mint eliminate stress and are calming; and the scent of citrus is harmonizing and reduces suspicion.<sup>32</sup>

Regardless of the kinds of scents a firm applies, the essential thing is to use scents that give the brand more depth and dimensions and can communicate what it stands for. In this way the brand's innermost feelings can be elucidated. Sony provides an example of this in its use of the scent of vanilla to highlight the brand's feminine side.<sup>33</sup>

### **Feminine Scents by Sony**

Sony searched among some 1,500 different aromatic oils to build a scent that could correctly capture the feeling of the brand and create a good atmosphere in its stores. Sony looked for a female-friendly scent because the company wanted to broaden its target group to include more women. Sony finally decided to add a scent of blood orange and vanilla, with a touch of cedar wood to prevent the scent from being too feminine and not pleasing to men. Critics have claimed that Sony manipulates its customers with this scent; however, the company argues that the scent is used to create a pleasant smell experience for customers.

Adding scents that please women might be of importance in the electronic business, which often is associated with hard and masculine values. Introducing feminine values might therefore give the brand more depth and dimensions.

Scents are of importance in facilitating brand awareness and establishing a sustainable brand image. This was shown in a survey report



with the title “Does It Make Sense to Use Scents to Enhance Brand Memory?”<sup>34</sup> The survey demonstrated that scents improve the recall and recognition of both familiar and unfamiliar brands. What is more, if such experiences of a brand are favorable, customers tend to remember it. This is a condition that a brand needs to reach in order to stay in the customer’s mind in the long term.

There is no doubt that scents can be part of a firm’s work of creating an image in the customer’s mind. Both goods producers and service providers have opportunities to use scents as a permanent element in sensory marketing, where the scent might be as natural as interior design, lighting, or music. Whenever a scent contributes to strengthening the customer’s sensory experience and the firm’s image it can be understood as an important element in sensory marketing.

“ Scents are as important as lighting, interior design, or music in the sensory experience ”

A firm does not need to have two feet on the ground to use scents. Singapore Airlines provides an example of how a brand can take off through the use of scents. In the aircraft cabin the scent of Stefan Floridian Waters is applied. It is the brand’s signature scent, which is worn by the cabin crew and added to the towels handed out to passengers before takeoff. The scent is for sale as a perfume, through which the company sells a feeling of the brand and perhaps even the travel destination.

It is also common to apply scents in the hotel business. Hotels such as the Oberoi Grand in Kolkata, the Hotel Metropole in Monte Carlo, the Conrad in Tokyo, the Carlyle in New York, the Dorchester in London, and the Langham Hotel in Hong Kong all use scents to strengthen their identity and convey the brand’s innermost feelings.

The fact that scents have a positive impact on hotel guests is shown in a study from 2006 of the Swedish design hotel the Nordic Light Hotel in Stockholm.<sup>35</sup> The reception, lobby areas, and corridors in particular are places where scents contribute to a sensory experience for guests. From this we might understand that hotel guests prefer scents in spaces they occupy for just a limited time.

In this context it should also be mentioned that scents follow the trends and fashions of different cultures and continents. Global hotel chains and other multinational firms, whose businesses are in contact with different cultures and nationalities, should be aware of this

when using scents. For example, the scent of fruit was popular in the United States at the start of the twenty-first century, but in Europe it was not appreciated so much.<sup>36</sup> Today, scents that express health and well-being are popular – for example, the scent of tea.<sup>37</sup>

Service providers such as travel agencies and hotels should focus on the customer's current well-being, because the service often is bought and produced at the same time together with the customer. Services are more abstract than goods, and their quality is generally more difficult to measure. The quality of goods is perceived as favorable if functional requirements are met, whereas the perceived quality of a service is dependent on emotional elements and the interaction between the seller and the buyer.

In sensory marketing, scent plays a central role in strategic marketing with regard to a firm's identity and core values. In addition, scents must facilitate a lasting smell experience at the same time as they contribute to the customer's well-being in the short term.

## The employee's environment and health

Whether a firm uses scents depends not only on customers but also on employees. Many important issues must be considered – including the risk of allergies, as employees in a service landscape are exposed to scents for longer than customers.

“ The smell of coffee symbolizes relaxation and fellowship at the workplace ”

In connection with the 1991 exhibition “The Sixth Sense” at the Museum of Work in Norrköping, Sweden, the museum advertised for written contributions under the title “Smell experiences at work.” In the stories that were sent in, what was noteworthy was how closely scents are connected with emotional feelings rather than the character of the scents.<sup>38</sup> The letters were about everything from love to annoyance with people who smelled like garlic, sweat, or tobacco. The smell most often mentioned was coffee, which was associated with fellowship and relaxation. The smell of freshly baked bread was also mentioned approvingly.

It is obvious that scents are an important part of many people's workplaces, although it is complex to determine how scents affect customers and employees, partly because it is difficult to measure,

classify, and express the intensity of a scent. For scents there is no counterpart to the decibel scale for sound.

As early as the eighteenth century, the Swedish botanist, physician, and zoologist Carl von Linné tried to group and classify scents. He expressed the difficulties thus:

There are countless kinds of scents and therefore it is very difficult to classify them. Generally they are divided into pleasant and unpleasant. We do not know how the pleasant scent acts except we feel it is pleasant and sweet for the nerves, yes even for the life-force.<sup>39</sup>

To study how scents actually affect people it is often necessary to test them in a real-world situation. The Swedish fashion chain Lindex has tested the scents of magnolia trees and of “summer and ocean” among its employees. The reactions were both positive and negative – some people did not notice the scents at all, and others got a headache from them.<sup>40</sup> Lindex argues that scent will shape customers’ perceptions and contribute to a better environment in the stores. However, the company will not risk its employees’ or customers’ health. The company believes that the important thing is not the scent itself but that it positively improves the sensory experience for customers. Lindex focuses on its product – fashion and clothes – but also takes into consideration soft essences such as scents to create a pleasant atmosphere in its stores.

Because humans scent preferences are individual, it is necessary wherever possible to use scents that have general acceptance. It is important to know that the substances used in scents might cause allergic reactions and might be the origin of nasal and respiratory problems, although it will not be clear whether someone is actually suffering because of a smell encountered earlier.

It should also be mentioned that people who remain in a service situation for a long time, including the staff in a store, may become less sensitive to a particular scent.<sup>41</sup> This fact should be taken into consideration when a firm is planning to introduce a scent. Some people believe that desensitization means there is no reason to be concerned about scents and their effect on the employees’ health. At the same time, it is important to apply scents that employees like and identify with to improve their well-being. This creates an environment that customers will also probably like. This can be seen as one element in a

firm's sensory marketing approach to strengthen its image in the long term in customers' minds.

In Japan some firms apply scents to boost employees' efforts and enhance their ability to concentrate.<sup>42</sup> Studies also show that scents can eliminate stress among employees.<sup>43</sup> Whether the use of scents for these purposes is ethical can, of course, be discussed. Regardless of the answer, this use illustrates the power of scents and their effect on people.

### Surf and smell the Net!

Not only in the real world is it possible for the individual to express his or her identity with scents. Technological developments may in the future make it possible to communicate and convey messages via scents on the Internet and other kinds of digital technology. This claim has been made by researchers in South Korea who, together with technology experts and customers, believe that as early as 2015 the Internet might be used as a place for smell experiences.<sup>44</sup>

“ Scents might soon be a competitive weapon on the Internet ”

Such technological innovation adds another dimension to the Internet and other digital media. To express oneself through scents is another way to keep, develop, and strengthen one's identity on the increasingly exploited Internet. As more people and firms access virtual communities such as Second Life, MySpace, and Facebook, the value of being unique naturally becomes important on the Internet.

It is obvious that scents might be used commercially in many ways on the Internet. Surely it will be easier to sell perfume, flowers, and wine if customers have the opportunity to smell the products online. Thus, digital technology may bring innovative methods of sensory marketing.

Video services on the Internet, including Google's YouTube and Yahoo! Video, let their users upload self-produced videos that can be watched all over the world. Digital scent technology would bring new competitors – or complements – to these video services.

However, technological progress does not necessarily favor only commercial interests. The public sector, such as medical and health

care, might also benefit. For example, it could be possible to diagnose distant patients using a computer. The European Union has given the researcher Hossam Haick a grant of 1.73 billion euros to develop an electronic nose with the ability to detect lung cancer. Because cancer cells leave a subtle but distinctive scent right from an early phase of the disease, a machine could detect the cancer in the breath exhaled from the lungs.

Scents could also have a positive preventive effect for hospital patients. This is illustrated in the following example, where scent machines demonstrate the significance of digital technology in creating a smell experience.

### **Easing Vanilla**

Florida Hospital's Seaside Center in the United States has created environments conducive to the well-being and health of patients. To achieve a smell experience, the hospital is using machines that circulate scents of the sea, coconut, and vanilla. The scent of vanilla permeates the radiology department, because it is felt to make people feel less claustrophobic.

One reason the hospital chose to use scent machines was to reduce the number of cancellations from patients waiting for X-rays. The hospital wants to use scents to create an environment that is stimulating and pleasant and at the same time relaxing and soothing. The expectation is that this will make patients stay and undergo the treatment.

Digital technology is also powerful when it comes to resisting and eliminating bad smells. Removing unwanted smells is an important factor in creating a good atmosphere in a service landscape, for example. Therefore there is huge financial interest in products and methods to eliminate unpleasant smells, not least in restaurants, bars, cafes, and night clubs, which have needed to work harder to ward off bad smells since the smoking ban was introduced in Sweden and other European countries.

Another example of this kind of work is provided by Volvo, which wants to eliminate unwanted smells from the interior of the car to create a pleasant and healthy atmosphere. This is described by the Volvo marketing department in Gothenburg, Sweden:

We put a lot of effort into making the car smell good when one enters it. The new S80 and all of our other cars are adapted for allergenic environments. The S80 is recommended by the Swedish Asthma and Allergy Association. When the car is opened with the hand control, the air is sucked out, as there is always an accumulation of the smell of plastic etcetera. This indicates the development work in this area, which is quite enormous.

It is clear that Volvo wants to remove unwanted smells and air from the car. Instead, the firm wants to emphasize, for example, the scent of leather, which many people think is attractive. The pleasant and healthy atmosphere that Volvo wants to achieve is also conducive to a safer driving experience and well-being.

The fact that it is possible to create a smell experience using Volvo's method illustrates the variety of options offered by working strategically with air, ventilation, and scents to contribute to customers' well-being and sensory experience.

## **THE BRAND AS SMELL EXPERIENCE**

We end this chapter with a description and discussion of how a smell experience can contribute to the expression of the identity of a hotel and strengthen its image. This happens because a hotel's product largely consists of emotional elements, including the treatment of the customer, the physical interior, and, not least, the atmosphere and environment, where air, ventilation, and scents are important elements.

Moreover, the duration of a customer's stay in a hotel is limited, and it is important for a hotel to stimulate the customer's senses strategically during this period. It is not enough that the bed is soft and the shower water warm; it is the customer's whole sensory experience that is in focus for a hotel's brand identity and brand image. To illustrate in more detail what can be done, we have chosen as an example the Hotel Park Hyatt Vendôme in Paris, France.

### Hotel Park Hyatt Vendôme – A Sensorial Smell Strategy

Even during its construction in 2002, a *signature scent* was planned for the hotel. The French perfumer Blaise Mautin was given the challenge of creating a scent that, together with the hotel's interior and modern design, would emphasize the hotel's deepest feelings and engender a good *atmosphere* to provide guests with a smell experience.

To develop a *product-congruent* scent that fit with the hotel's values and identity, Mautin met the hotel team regularly over a period of months. After studying floor plans of the hotel and discussing design, quality, and the hotel's philosophy of sensory experience and well-being with the hotel team, Mautin presented a scent of patchouli – a strong-smelling flower oil used in certain exclusive perfumes. Among other things, this scent was believed to be in harmony with the hotel's rich mahogany detailing.

However, the scent of patchouli was felt to be a little formal, so extracts of sweet Brazilian oranges and natural sandalwood were added. Synthetic and natural vanilla was also added to give the scent an element of amber and softness, as well as a Russian-inspired scent comparable to the scent of burning wood. The final formula for the scent contained more than eighteen ingredients.

The signature scent integrates with the other elements of the hotel, including the white orchids in the reception, the soft flowing lines of the interior, the luxurious Thai silks, and the textured surfaces. The scent is not easy to identify – it is not the scent of a tree or a flower. It has been described as the scent of “fresh cement poured over a raw oak plank, plus fresh, ever-so-slightly cinnamony pastry dough, with the olfactory texture of thick, rich tan silk.” Moreover, it is said that the scent's brilliance is its *intensity*, because it is subtle and therefore not easy to define. However, the point is not to describe the scent: instead, go experience it!

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## THE SOUND SENSE

*Sound affects our mood and psychological state, alerts us to danger, and promotes peace of mind for the soul*

This chapter discusses the importance of sound for individuals and organizations. It shows how different sense expressions can contribute to a sound experience. The role of celebrities and musicians as part of a holistic perspective on sound is also emphasized. Finally, Saab, part of the U.S. carmaker General Motors, is presented as an example of the brand as a sound experience.

### SOUND TO HEAR AND UNDERSTAND

#### Resonant brands

It took the U.S. company Microsoft eighteen months to develop the sound that plays when Windows Vista starts up. Microsoft was looking for a clear, simple sound that would reflect the rhythm of the words “Windows Vista,” consisting of four chords with a duration of four seconds. Four is also the number of colors in the visual logotype for Windows Vista. Because the sound would be played on millions of computers every day, it was essential to find a sound that expressed the identity of the brand and also contributed to a pleasant sound experience.

Sound has been applied in mass marketing for a long time. It has been used to communicate messages and create awareness about a firm and its products since the early twentieth century, mainly in television and radio commercials, where music is often intended to dramatize or enhance an idea.<sup>1</sup>



Why is sound often underestimated in marketing?



More and more firms have come to realize that sound is important for understanding arguments, opinions, and feelings. In sensory marketing, this can be realized through sound logotypes, jingles, voices, or music. The integration of such sound expressions is termed “muzak,” named after the company Muzak, which patented a system for playing music in the workplace.

Every day, people hear a great number of sounds that convey what is happening in their environment. The first sounds that people notice are those with high frequencies, but many sounds can affect us even when we are not aware of them. When a low-frequency continuous sound, such as the noise from a fan or refrigerator, stops, we may experience great relief.

People have a keen ability to remember sounds from earlier times in their life. For instance, the music of our youth can create strong feelings about the time and place it was heard.<sup>2</sup>

### We are born listeners

The sound sense is constantly active and cannot be turned off. People live in symbiosis with sound and determine dimensions in life through it. We do not limit ourselves to experiencing sound and silence; we also give sound meaning by interpreting, communicating, and expressing ourselves through sound.

There is a difference between hearing and listening. Hearing involves the ear receiving sound without our taking notice. Listening requires that we hold back our thoughts and speech and consciously focus on the sound. The sounds perceived as important are the ones we choose to listen to.<sup>3</sup>

People are born listeners. As a fetus we learn to listen to the heart-beat of our mother; after we are born, we learn to separate ourselves from the sounds around us. As people continuously search for new knowledge, the possibilities to form and reform their identity and perception of the world through sound are endless.<sup>4</sup>

Figure 4.1 illustrates how the sound sense works. We experience sound when sound waves in the air make our eardrums vibrate. The volume of a sound is measured in decibels (dB), and its intensity is measured in terms of pressure variations. The lowest level a human

“

Even as a fetus, we  
form our identity  
through sound

”

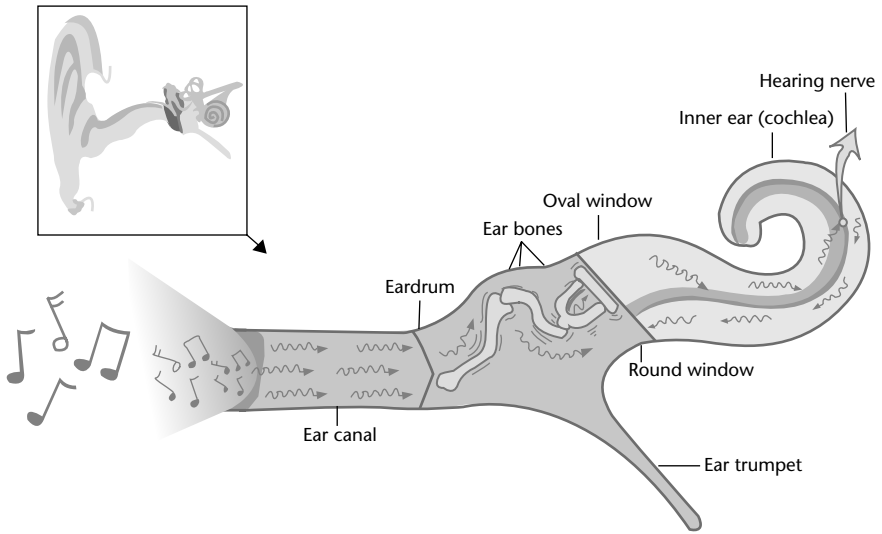


FIGURE 4.1 **The functioning of the sound sense**

*Source: Bild & Form Jonny Hallberg.*

can apprehend is 0 dB, and the normal upper threshold of hearing is 120 dB. Normal dialogue is approximately 60 dB, whispering 20 dB, and a rock concert 100 dB. The three bones of the middle ear, which are connected to the eardrum, convert sound waves into mechanical waves, which are transmitted to a fluid medium in the inner ear. The cochlea has 24,000 microscopic hair cells that register the movements of the fluid in the inner ear. The sound signal registered by these hair cells is transmitted to the brain through the auditory nerve.

### **Sound as source of association**

People often express their identity through sounds. Verbally, we tell others who we are, what we stand for, and how we feel. Sounds help clarify our arguments, opinions, and feelings in a way that facial expressions alone cannot.

We also identify ourselves through sound – mainly music – with which we feel intimate. The Internet, cell phones, and radio and TV music channels allow access to almost any kind of music 24/7.

At one McDonald's restaurant in Chicago a digital jukebox enables guests to use cell phones or laptops to select the kind of music played in the restaurant. This provides individual opportunities to create a sound experience at McDonald's. And guests can also buy the music and take it home with them, which then associates the music with the company.

For many people, one of their most important accessories is an mp3 player or a cell phone with mp3 function, illustrating the personal significance of music. At home, on the bus, on the way to work, or out jogging, we take our music with us. Depending on our mood, the weather, or even the day of the week, we express ourselves through different types of music.

Firms also can express their identity through sound. More and more firms are realizing the importance of sound in enhancing a brand's identity and image.<sup>5</sup> For instance, in the retail sector many firms are aware of how music can help them build a stronger identity.<sup>6</sup> Companies such as the U.S. retail chains The Gap, Eddie Bauer, and Toys "R" Us invest in music programs customized for their brands.<sup>7</sup>

The deliberate use of sound in sensory marketing implies that a sound experience should be associated with a brand. This can involve short jingles, sound logotypes, and music. However, music that consists of longer sound sequences is seldom associated with a brand, because it cannot be repeated as often as jingles or sound logotypes.

The inspiration for one of Apple's iPod touch commercials came from an eighteen-year-old British student, Nick Haley, who produced a homemade commercial for the mp3 player. The commercial, which was shown on YouTube, was based around the song "Music Is My Hot Hot Sex" by the Brazilian band Cansei de Ser Sexy. Apple saw Haley's commercial and believed it fit well with the brand's identity. The commercial was successful, and Haley received a laptop as a reward, among other things.

## **SOUND AS EXPERIENCE TRIGGER**

Commercial competition among brands in the binary society demands new and innovative forms of differentiation. Thus, a firm might choose to elucidate its identity using sound as part of a sensory marketing framework. The British researcher Daniel M. Jackson, author of the book *Sonic Branding*, avers that the most important aspect to consider

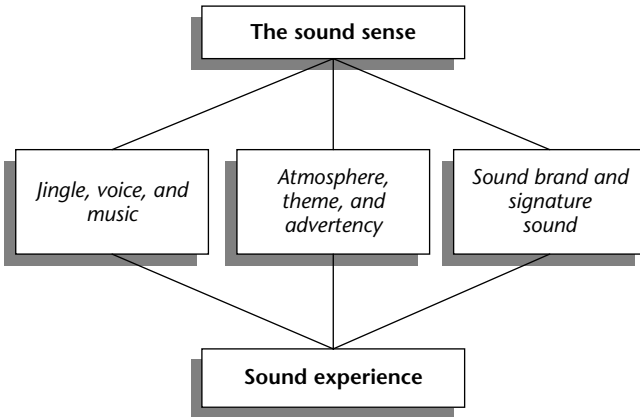


FIGURE 4.2 **Sense expressions and the sound experience**

Source: B. Hultén, N. Broweus, and M. van Dijk, *Sinnesmarknadsföring* (Malmö: Liber AB, 2008).

during the formation of the sound is the connection to the brand's identity. Jackson suggests that sound should be applied consistently throughout a firm's sensory marketing to achieve a sound that is distinctive, memorable, and flexible.

The different kinds of sense expressions that can facilitate a sound experience are illustrated in Figure 4.2.

### **Jingle, voice, and music**

A *jingle* as a sense expression can contribute to the sound experience of a brand. In the United States jingles were used as a new way to market new products and services as early as the 1920s. During the following decades jingles became more important in marketing.

In the 1940s Austen Herbert Croom-Johnson and Alan Bradley Kent developed the jingle "Pepsi-Cola Hits the Spot," which was the first network jingle. The Pepsi jingle was successfully placed in millions of jukeboxes around the United States. During the same decade a jingle developed for the Chiquita Banana brand of the U.S. United Fruit Company became very popular. It was created by the U.S. advertising agency BBDO under the guidance of Robert Foreman. The jingle became so popular that it was recorded by several artists and sold

almost one million copies. At the peak of its popularity it was played more than 376 times in one day.<sup>8</sup>

The Swedish retail fashion chain Lindex also uses jingles.

### Jingles for Seasonal Variation

Lindex decided to use a jingle to enhance the sound experience for its customers. The jingle was played in stores and in TV commercials to increase the recognition level. Because the firm adjusts its sensory marketing depending on the season, the jingle was adapted to the current theme and season. When the seasonal theme “Fashion Report Paris” was relevant, an accordion sound was added to the jingle to create the feeling of Paris. The accordion sound was so subtle that customers had to focus carefully to notice it. Other than these seasonal variations, the jingle was consistent.

Jingles have traditionally been characterized by short lyrics and commercial messages. They are memorable because short sound sequences that are repeated tend to be easily remembered. Characteristic jingles tend to sound similar to songs by recording artists.<sup>9</sup>

“ The modern jingle sounds similar to songs by musicians ”

The Viejas Casino in San Diego uses a jingle based on Elvis Presley’s song “Viva Las Vegas.” The song has been updated and modernized to make it sound as innovative as possible. The jingle is relatively short and reminiscent of a traditional jingle, but the difference is the association with the rock legend’s hit tune.

Firms can also apply *voice* as a sense expression in sensory marketing. The fact that voice is important for the sound experience was noted in a study where a computer read good and bad news in both happy and sad voices.<sup>10</sup> When the negative news was read with a happy voice, or the positive news with a sad voice, the voice was not perceived as reliable. This might be explained by an innate ability in humans to uncover personalities and feelings.

Yahoo developed a voice for its telephone system that was intended to be innovative, simple, youthful, and fun to listen to, in the hope

of using a voice to enhance the sound experience and associate it with the brand. Several thousand phrases were recorded in the digital voice, and customers could hear phrases such as “What can I get you?,” “Got it,” and “Is that right?”



The voice can be the brand's personality



For a voice to enhance the identity of the brand it needs to be used continuously and coherently. The German carmaker BMW provides an example.

### **BMW and the Actor's Voice**

BMW in Great Britain believes that a carefully selected voice is of major importance in the company's sensory marketing. For more than ten years BMW has been using the British actor David Suchet's voice to give the right feeling to its commercials. Together with the British advertising agency WCRS, BMW conducted consumer research into different voices for BMW's radio commercials, including David Suchet's. It was shown that BMW had created a stronger identity by using the actor's voice.

It is possible to watch on YouTube how the American stand-up comedian Pablo Francisco is skilled in imitating the dark and menacing voice used in movie trailers. This provides insight into the opportunities for firms to use voices that customers perceive as self-explanatory and expected in a given context. In the same way as the trailer voice is associated with American movies, the selected voice of a firm can be associated with a brand.

Voices tend to have a positive effect on sensory marketing when consumers have little knowledge about the message conveyed. Customers cannot be expected to be aware of new standards and technologies, for example. In this case, voices can inform customers and enhance the message. Voices are also important in “story-telling.”

Voices perceived as personal, emotional, and friendly tend to create a positive sound experience associated with the image of the brand. Digitized voices – for instance, those used in telephone switchboards or on public transport – often have the opposite impact, being perceived



as formal and impersonal and thereby not particularly welcoming or pleasing.

Voices also contribute to improving the sound experience in the service landscape. The Swedish airline company SAS is well aware of this fact, and the company has noted the opportunities of using voices in the cabin to increase on-board sales, for instance.

Thus, voices can be used to deliver rational messages about low prices, high quality, and competitive advantage. An example can be given from the Stockholm store of the Swedish bed manufacturer Hästens.

### Digital Voices for Better Sleep

Over a fourteen-day period voices were used in the store to inform customers about products and to offer a sensory experience. Digital voices challenged customers to test out beds. The campaign resulted in increases of 48 percent in those trying beds, 53 percent in sales, and 74 percent in brochure consumption. In addition, customers' willingness actively to contact a salesperson increased 40 percent.

The Hästens case shows how voices can be used tactically to attract customers' attention and spread general information that simplifies messages for them. However, the successful use of voices relies on using the same kind of voice in a variety of media to enhance the brand in the long term.

Finally, *music* as a sense expression can create a sound experience and enhance a brand's identity and image. Some researchers claim that music is the optimal sense expression to create a long-lasting impression on customers.<sup>11</sup>

Music can influence both conscious and unconscious customer actions. Moreover, music has the power to lead people and create a sense of group belonging.<sup>12</sup>

“ Music affects emotions and behavior, which can create a sense of group belonging ”

One study showed that music triggers certain emotions shared by many people that convey our inner feelings without our needing to define them.<sup>13</sup> It noted, for example, that selected passages of Bach led to the same kind of reaction for each participant.

Music can convey a feeling and the identity of a brand in a way jingles and voices cannot. Customers today are often critical of clever sound clips intended to win their trust. Music can win customers' trust in the long term and elucidate the brand's identity to create associations and experiences related to the brand. An example is provided by the Nordic Light Hotel in Stockholm.

### **800 Songs for the Brand's Identity**

The Nordic Light Hotel uses music specially selected to complement the company's identity in order to elucidate how the brand should be experienced. The music selection includes 800 songs that aim to create a pleasant atmosphere in the hotel. Music is streamed through the Internet, and it is possible to listen to the music being played in the lobby of the hotel, for instance, on the company's website. The music is categorized to suit different themes and times of the day. For example, a morning channel plays when guests are eating breakfast. In addition, the volume is varied according to the number of people in residence.

In the service landscape music can affect customers to the extent that they feel comfortable and decide to stay longer in a store, spend more money, and recommend the store to others.<sup>14</sup>

One research study also claimed that music affects people's behavior in restaurants.<sup>15</sup> Music with a fast tempo makes guests leave the tables more quickly, making room for other diners. Playing such music might be useful for fast-food chains and lunch restaurants that want high customer turnover. Music with a slower tempo can be played during evenings to make customers stay longer and order more.

The tempo of music affects people's perception of time. A study published in the *Psychology and Marketing* journal shows that music with a slow tempo – in contrast to music with a fast tempo – increases emotional feedback and makes customers perceive waiting time to be shorter.<sup>16</sup>

A customer perception of reduced waiting time can be



**Music with a slow tempo creates well-being and makes customers stay longer in the service landscape**



useful in the consumption of services when it reduces negative reactions to waiting. It can also result in customers spending more time in the service landscape, which may increase unplanned purchases.<sup>17</sup>

Music can also affect people's degree of arousal. The U.S. retail chain Abercrombie & Fitch plays music with a fast tempo to achieve a high degree of customer arousal, and Starbucks uses music with a slower tempo to achieve the opposite effect. In either case, music that represents the desired level of arousal should be played to elucidate the brand's identity.<sup>18</sup>

The brand's identity can be enhanced by using tempo and music genre coherently to prevent customers from feeling confused.<sup>19</sup> Tempo and genre can affect customers' well-being and perception of service level. A study in the *Journal of Services Marketing* showed that both fast- and slow-tempo music affects well-being and the perception of the service positively.<sup>20</sup>

### **Atmosphere, theme, and advertency**

Sense expressions such as *atmosphere*, *theme*, and *advertency* are commonly discussed in relation to creating the best sound experience for a brand. Frequently music from the radio hit list is used without accurate analysis of its suitability. Sensory marketing prescribes a more considered selection of music than this. The conscious selection of background or foreground music can create a pleasant atmosphere in barber shops, restaurants, and department stores, for example.

Background music is instrumental and is often restricted in terms of variation of tempo, frequency, and volume. Foreground music generally includes lyrics and is more varied in tempo, frequency, and volume.<sup>21</sup>

Background and foreground music make it possible to target specific groups according to factors such as age and gender. A study in the *Journal of Consumer Marketing* discussed the effect of background and foreground music on women and men in the same age group.<sup>22</sup> Women spent more than twice as much when background music was played rather than foreground music. For men, the opposite result obtained: foreground music increased sales to nearly double compared with background music.

Moreover, men perceived the store as better and more spacious when foreground music was played. Women perceived the store as

more hospitable, more sophisticated, and more exclusive when background music was played. Even the participants' age turned out to be a relevant factor in how the music was experienced. The older group, aged fifty and above, spent more money with background music. The group aged between twenty-five and forty-nine spent more when foreground music was played.

It is apparent that music can help create an *atmosphere* that attracts different target groups. Thus the selection of music is very important. Playing music that does not attract the target group is as bad as using colors that are wrong, lighting that is too bright or too dim, or a temperature that is too high or too low.

The Swedish fashion chain Gina Tricot plays music to create the right atmosphere in its stores, transferring the feeling of the brand through a sound experience alongside its visual sense expressions. The customers' focus should be on the clothes, but the right atmosphere can be stimulating and positively affect their behavior.

Sound can also be used to enhance a *theme* as a sense expression. The Swedish brand Volvo uses this technique in TV campaigns and on the Internet to market different car models. Volvo has a long tradition of using musical elements in sensory marketing, as in its 2006 TV commercials, which used a series of events to create interest and excitement around the car models. The music in the commercials varied to complement the car model and theme – a city jeep or a family car, for example.

The type of music applicable to a certain commercial ad or theme was examined in a study published in the *Journal of Consumer Research*.<sup>23</sup> The study showed the impact of two characteristics of music: indexicality and fit. Indexicality was defined as “the extent to which music arouses emotion-laden memories,” and fit was defined as “consumers' subjective perception of the music's relevance or appropriateness to the central ad message.”

It was shown that indexicality significantly enhanced message processing among low-involvement subjects. Neither fit nor indexicality affected high-involvement subjects' negative emotions. The study concluded that fit plays a powerful role in creating favorable attitudes toward ads and brands. Thus, when the fit between the music and the visual message in an ad is high, the ad is regarded as more pleasant.

### Swedish Songs for the Brand

The Swedish hamburger chain Max has a consistent musical theme to create a pleasant sound experience for its customers. The company plays only modern Swedish songs in its restaurants. In the summer of 2008 it introduced its own Internet radio channel playing modern Swedish songs from artists such as Kleerup, Lykke Li, and Håkan Hellstrom. "This is the first step in our concentration to present new, exciting Swedish music for our guests. . . . [L]isten to the music played in the restaurants right now or listen whenever you want at our website."

*Advertency* is another sense expression for the sound experience. It can be illustrated with an example from the Swedish retail chain IKEA, which wanted to improve service by discovering the three most common questions employees were asked. One of these questions turned out to be where the shopping carts in the "pick it yourself" department were located, despite the presence of large signs giving that information.

To solve this problem and reduce hard work for employees, IKEA played the sound of shopping carts hitting each other close to the shopping carts. This resulted in more customers finding their shopping carts without needing to ask the employees to help them, clearly showing how sound can function in a rational manner.

“ Sound can obviate the need for employees to give customers directions ”

Another example is Lindex's use of music to create advertency. Loudspeakers were placed in the shop front, and the sound level was adjusted according to the number of people passing by on the street, with the hope of increasing awareness of the store.

### Sound brand and signature sound

It is possible to protect a sound legally as a brand. A *sound brand* as a sense expression means that other firms are restrained from using the same sound. Using a sound brand is an additional way to enhance a brand's identity.

A sound brand is a sound or melody that is distinctly recognizable. To register a sound brand the sound must be reproduced graphically, using, for example, musical notation.<sup>24</sup> It is not possible to register all kinds of sounds, and it is difficult to seek a patent for a sound's tempo, bass, or descant.

The business idea of the Swedish brand Hemglass, owned by the Swiss company Nestlé, is to sell ice-cream directly to households around Sweden, Finland, Denmark, and Norway. The company uses a signature melody that is played when the ice-cream car enters a new suburb or city. The melody was written by the Swedish composer Robert Sund and is the most famous registered sound brand in Sweden.



The signature melody from Hemglass' ice-cream cars is the most famous registered sound brand in Sweden



It is also possible to apply a *signature sound* as a sensory expression to connect a certain sound with a brand. This can be achieved when firms consistently and deliberately apply certain sounds that are related to the brand's identity and values. In contrast to sound brands, signature sounds are not legally protected.

The U.S. retail chain Abercrombie & Fitch shows how a signature sound can be applied.

### Music As Lifestyle

The signature sound at Abercrombie & Fitch is expressed through famous songs that have been mixed to create the right atmosphere in the service landscape. A heavy bass represented in every song characterizes the firm's music. The music played is very loud and gives the impression of a night club. The songs are mixed to build up the expectation that something more is under way. There are no gaps between the tracks, and therefore the tempo and sound pressure are constant in the store. Customers like the music, and many dance in time to it. Employees also dance, which gives the relaxed feeling of a party and "living it up."

A particular musical genre – such as jazz, R&B, or rock – can be connected to a brand. It is also possible to use music characterized by high volume, a distinct bass, a specific voice, or a particular tempo. This

can include music by famous artists and self-produced music with or without vocals.

The coffeehouse *Fräcka Fröken* – located at the gossip square in the old industry and business hub city of Norrköping in Sweden – plays music by the Swedish singer-songwriter Anna Ternheim to offer a pleasant sound experience for its customers. This music has been played consistently for some time and might be seen as the company's signature sound, associated by many customers with this coffeehouse.

## THE HOLISM OF SOUND

### Personalities and artists

Sound as a sense expression in a firm's sensory marketing strategy can be seen as the long-term application of sound profiles whereby music and artists enhance a brand's identity.

Catchy radio jingles and dashing TV music are not enough to clarify a brand's identity and values. We maintain that in a sensory marketing framework, a firm should develop and apply a sound profile in which the sound of everything from the service landscape to telephone switchboards, commercials, and employees' voices is taken into consideration.

To create a sound experience for the individual, a sound profile needs to be communicated consistently and continuously. Just as firms use colors, design, and logotypes for branding, a brand's identity can be conveyed through sound. Music is one way of emphasizing the personality of a brand. Customers have ears, and brands accordingly need to express their personality through music or voices, for example.

It is possible to apply sound to associate a brand with a specific person. Using celebrities can add value to the brand when their personalities and values are in accordance with that brand. Famous people used in sensory marketing include Justin Timberlake for McDonald's, with the jingle "I'm Lovin' It," and Britney Spears, Pink, and Beyoncé, in the song "We Will Rock You" for Pepsi.

Music in marketing has traditionally been about using a song or a jingle to convey a message, an idea, or a theme. Firms have often used classic songs by famous artists, for which they have paid royalties. With today's tough rivalry, the media climate is different, and it is necessary to have something extra to attract customers.

There are opportunities to create a unique sound experience for a brand by putting a branded “touch” on the music. This can be achieved by using unknown and non-established artists to express the brand’s identity. Firms can work with musicians to achieve advertency and mutual awareness.

If a store plays music by an unknown artist for some time, a synergy between the brand and the artist can be created. In this way, firms can play music that is not yet famous and create early new associations for the artist among customers.

For the unknown artist this can be an excellent channel to stand out among the competition. The Knife’s song “Heartbeats” became a hit for the Swedish indie folk singer-songwriter José Gonzáles of Argentinean descent after a commercial for Sony Bravia in which 250,000 colorful balls were rolled down the streets of San Francisco. Firms need to follow such innovative lines of thought to evolve their sensory marketing using music.

The possibilities and importance of finding new ways to apply sound are evident. Starbucks, which played early music by Norah Jones, focuses on the holism of sound. Through the concept “Hear Music – The Sound of Starbucks” the company hopes to offer its guests a memorable sound experience.<sup>25</sup>

### **Hear the Sound of Starbucks**

The Hear Music Starbucks coffeehouses have specific areas where customers can sit in a comfortable armchair and listen to music in a pleasurable atmosphere. This results in customers staying longer and ordering more – coffee as well as music. Hear Music stores also host live artists. And each Starbucks plays fewer than twenty songs, which provides opportunities for artists to be noticed and get a breakthrough. As yet only a few Starbucks coffeehouses are using this concept, but it is something that will be explored and expanded.

Through this focus on creating a sound experience for guests, Starbucks offers much more than just the coffee itself. When artists perform live, the sound experience may seem more personal, not only because the music is being played here and now but also because guests can meet the artists and speak with them. This increases the



interaction between guests and Starbucks, which can add to the sensory experience that the firm is trying to transfer. The sensory experience is integrated with the company's "Coffee Experience," because a visit to Starbucks is something more than an ordinary trip to buy coffee.

An article in the Swedish retail magazine *Dagens Handel* in September 2006 discussed some crucial factors in the use of live bands in sensory marketing practice.<sup>26</sup> Music by a singer-songwriter can result in decreased sales, because the music requires that customers listen actively to the lyrics and the music. However, the article also says that this type of music can attract customers who would not otherwise be interested, which can be beneficial in the long term.

Many firms that use live bands, including Starbucks, also sell the music on CD, which enables the sound experience of the brand to be re-experienced in the car, at home, or at work. The Discovery Channel and American Eagle Outfitters sell the music played in-store. In this way, firms can be aware of customers' preferences and can customize music and advertising campaigns to their needs and interests.<sup>27</sup>

“

It is possible to buy the music played in stores and remember the sound experience at home

”

### Technology and acoustics

The perfect sound experience requires an understanding of the holism of sound and not only of the context in which sound is useful. Sound must be balanced and controlled using digital technology to create a pleasant acoustic in a service landscape.

Because every sound that surrounds customers affects their experience of a brand, it is important to control the sound to create a pleasant sound experience. This involves not only adding sound but also eliminating certain sounds.

“

Not all sounds are positive, which is why acoustics are important

”

The Nordic Light Hotel applies this principle in its restaurant, where the tables are covered with a surface of rubber to eliminate rattling sounds when something is put on the table. Acoustic curtains are used in the hotel's lounge to create a pleasant sound experience.

For carmakers it is important to create pleasant acoustics for the driving experience. The following example illustrates how the smallest detail can be critical for the sound experience.

**The Sound of a Bentley**

Reducing noise is an important part of the sound experience of a Bentley. Therefore sound technicians investigate early in production how the design and shape of the car will affect the interior sound. This can include everything from the sound of closing a door to the sound from wind, the street, and the engine. Bentley makes sure that the sound is unique, real, and immediately identified with its brand.

The creation of pleasant acoustics can also be about separating divisions in stores and department stores. Discovery Channel stores are divided into zones to emphasize their distinguishing features and the products' variety. The music creates an atmosphere that draws customers to move among the different divisions to discover what sound will greet them next.<sup>28</sup>

Balancing, eliminating, and controlling sound to create pleasant acoustics can also be achieved using sound walls and sound beams. Sound walls can be installed to separate divisions – for example, in restaurants to screen off sounds from the kitchen. Sound beams allow sound to be focused on a specific area, similar to how a floodlight lights up a particular spot. This technology can be applied in short-term campaigns to point customers to special offers or benefits.

It should also be mentioned that technology can allow different kinds of selected music to be played during different times of the day. The retail chain JCPenny in the United States uses this system to adjust the music depending on demographic factors – for example, playing Latin American music when Hispanic customers are in the stores.<sup>29</sup> With such technology, the possibilities for firms to create a memorable sound experience seem almost unlimited.

**THE BRAND AS SOUND EXPERIENCE**

Sound has not traditionally played an important role in strategic marketing, and its potential has not always been noticed. However,

carmakers have long considered sound by eliminating noise from the interior and using materials in the doors to eliminate any rattling when they are opened and closed.

In this way, a sound experience can express a car brand's identity and values, especially in an industry where functional attributes are almost equal among different carmakers. The commercial "Release Me," used by the Saab brand, which is part of the U.S. carmaker General Motors, illustrates the sound experience in sensory marketing practice.

### Saab – A Sensorial Sound Strategy

The successful commercials for the environmentally friendly car models 9–3 BioPower and 9–5 BioPower were created to communicate environmental *awareness* and the functional benefit of these car models. The *theme* of the commercials was natural forces that want to be released, visually expressed by, for instance, a butterfly trying to get out of an abandoned summerhouse and a dog trying to tear loose from its leash. This was intended to illustrate the benefits customers get from driving environmentally friendly cars.

To strengthen the message, Saab was looking for *music* that could raise the commercial to a higher level. Saab's project leader, Lena Olander, said: "There is an incredible chance to transfer a feeling much more strongly with music and emphasize what we want to say." As a starting point, Engelbert Humperdinck's 1967 song "Release Me" was used. However, the song did not provide the right feeling for the commercial, so Saab searched for a non-established artist to produce a song with its own identity and character. Saab found the artist Frida Öhrn and, with the band Oh Laura, tried out the specially written song "Release Me." This song turned out to be a complete success, and Öhrn's delicate and frangible *voice* created a simple sound that perfectly expressed the natural forces.

Two days after the commercial's premiere it was accessible on YouTube and had been played 10,000 times already. By first showing the commercial "Release Me" globally and promoting it heavily on Swedish television, and through Oh Laura's subsequent release of their debut album, Saab achieved more recognition, with consumers associating the song "Release Me" with Saab's BioPower.

The commercial was made available for free download on the Internet. It won the prize for "campaign of the month" from the Swedish

newspaper *Resumé* and also gold in the Swedish contest “100-wattaren.” Above all it has won customers’ minds and hearts, as shown by the following comments received by Saab: “‘Release Me’ is insanely good, get goose-pimples when I listen to it...guess I should thank Saab for discovering you”; “The best to be released for a long time...was enthralled the first time I heard your commercial on TV. The voice makes my short hairs rise...extreme intensity.”

The sound experience Saab created with Oh Laura was something more than the usual, and the song was recorded in a full-length version instead of the commercial standard of approximately half a minute. The song was distributed in tens of thousands of copies to authorized dealers around the world to be given out on test drives and at different events.

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# 5

## THE SIGHT SENSE

*Most of our decisions in daily life are based upon sight impressions*

This chapter begins with a discussion of the importance of a firm's "genetic code" in clarifying its identity as a brand. Then, different sense expressions in visualizing a brand and creating a sight experience are discussed. In this regard the meaning of the down-to-earth and virtual formation of the service landscape in a holistic perspective is emphasized. Finally, the U.S. fashion retailer Abercrombie & Fitch is presented as an example of the brand as a sight experience.

### THE ART OF SEEING

#### The genetic code

To stand out among the many brands in the binary society, a firm has to be seen much more easily and clearly than ever before. A customer's sight experience can focus his or her attention on a specific firm or brand. For a firm, this offers possibilities to visualize and clarify a brand's identity and values in many different ways.<sup>1</sup>

Brands such as the Swedish Absolut Vodka, the American Apple, and the German BMW are often cited as examples of companies which have succeeded in visualizing their identities and values through the use of design as their main competitive advantage. However, it has to be pointed out that these well-known brands are also characterized by a broad spectrum of other design components than just the logotype of the company. In the case of Apple, the brand is expressed through the apple logotype and stylish product design, but also through the colors



Design as a "genetic code" is used in differentiating a brand



black and white. Together these components convey an overall visual impression to customers.

It is common among designers to talk about the “genetic code” of firms and brands to describe how it is possible for them to differentiate themselves from their competitors. This genetic code is expressed through the bottle’s shape and color in the case of Absolut Vodka; for Apple, it comprises design and logotype.<sup>2</sup> For BMW, the timeless style of the car is expressed through the split motor grille that has been a clear distinguishing feature for decades.

Apple’s founder Steve Jobs stressed as early as the beginning of the 1980s the importance of design as a competitive advantage. Design was seen as a way to differentiate the Macintosh (nowadays only “Mac”), as a computer, from the competitors’ PCs. (Incidentally, Macintosh is a Canadian apple variety.)

The intention at the time was to try to reach the market leader position in industrial design, using the Italian typewriter manufacturer Olivetti as a model. Nowadays Apple is seen as one of the most innovative and forward-looking companies in the world and is well known for the novel, bold design of its products, such as the iPhone, iPod, and iMac.

The visual whole, or the genetic code, can also be expressed beyond the physical product through service landscapes such as shops, malls, offices, and websites. Sony Ericsson provides an example: through the establishment of its own concept stores, the company aims to highlight soft values that are not usually associated with hard products such as mobile phones. To this end, design is used to distinguish the brand from its competitors, to create soft values, and to make the brand visually more attractive to customers.

A firm’s or a brand’s identity, its genetic code, can also be expressed by marketing through advertising, electronic media, or websites that make use of such visual and verbal elements as design, logotype, style, and symbols to build brand awareness and create brand image. For many commodities a visualized identity can help customers recognize a brand. Furthermore, a visual identity can call to mind positive experiences of more complex products such as cars and computers compared with commodities such as butter and tea: If product A is

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The genetic code  
can appear in many  
contexts

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known and works well, that impression can be transferred to product B from the same company.

This chapter deals with how the sight sense contributes to establishing the identity of a firm or a brand, which in turn can create an individual's sight experience. For a long time the sight sense has been dominant among marketing practitioners in the promotion of goods as well as services. In this regard the visual identity of a firm or a brand emphasizes the importance of the customer's sight experience.

### The brightest sense

Among the human senses, the sight sense is the most prominent: The eyes are the most important human sense organs, in that more than two-thirds of the sense cells of the body are located in the eyes. Nevertheless, only a limited range of wavelengths can be perceived by the human eye; X-ray radiation and microwaves, for example, are not visible.

Most people trust their sight experience completely. Sight helps us perceive contrasts and differences between, for example, small and big, light and dark, or thin and thick. In this regard the sense of sight and the optical system make it easier for a person to notice the *changes* and *differences* that characterize a new design, a different package, or a new store interior. Each of us can notice and observe events, colors, forms, material, texture, things, or people.



All contrasts,  
differences, and  
disturbances are caught  
by the sight sense



The ability to see is widely considered the most powerful of the five human senses and is also the most seductive sense, as Ackerman suggests: "As soon as we compare something with something else, as we do all the time, we take refuge in sight to catch the setting or the mood."<sup>3</sup> Humans learn very early in life to interpret visual impressions, and seeing is regarded as something that we learn to do. It is the visible that has the greatest impact on us, through visual effects such as light and dark, non-visual effects such as dazzling and radiation, and biological effects such as liveliness and alertness. For all kinds of learning it is necessary that a person's eyes move actively and that the sight system is concentrated upon



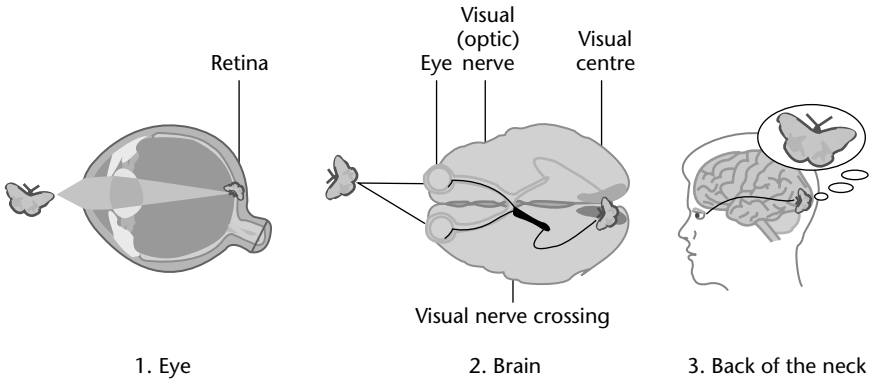


FIGURE 5.1 **A comparison between the human eye and a camera**

Source: Bild & Form Jonny Hallberg.

observing contrasts, differences, and disturbances. Figure 5.1 compares the human eye to a camera to illustrate how the sight sense works.

In physiological terms, light is filtered through the pupil of the eye, which is able to shrink and widen. The pupil can be compared to the aperture in a camera, which controls the amount of light that enters. Similarly, the cornea and the lens of the eye can be compared to the lens of a camera, as they focus light to create a sharp picture on the retina. This means that the retina might be regarded as the “film” of the eye. In the human eye, a picture is formed on the retina in which contrasts and differences are reinforced, for example with shape and color. This picture is then transmitted as an electrical signal via the optic nerve to the visual cortex at the back of the brain, where further processing and interpretation of conscious sight impressions occur. Every picture is compared with earlier experiences and memories, so that every new picture has a relation to previous sensory experiences.

“ Visualization is as important for services at it is for classical goods ”

Seeing is reinforced by touch, in that touch helps us get a fuller understanding of what we see. A baby who can touch his or her environment thereby learns about dimension, line, style, structure, and so on. In fact, the newborn child looks at the world upside down, because it takes a while before the brain has learned to turn the picture the right way up.

## VISUALIZATION AS EXPERIENCE TRIGGER

Most of our decisions in daily life are based on sight impressions. The visualization of a firm's sense expressions is required to clarify a firm's or a brand's identity. The sight sense, through visualization as an experience trigger, can contribute to creating brand awareness and brand image. The different sense expressions that can facilitate this process are illustrated in Figure 5.2.

An individual's sight experience is made up of a number of visual sense expressions of a firm or a brand. These sense expressions, individually or together, can visualize goods, services, and the service landscape.

Sense expressions such as design, packaging, and style are often related more to physical goods than to intangible services. But expressions such as color, light, and theme can appear in the context of goods and services as well as the service landscape, where expressions such as graphics, exterior, and interior also play a role.

**“ Design, aesthetics, and beauty are crucial to creating our fellow-feeling with brands ”**

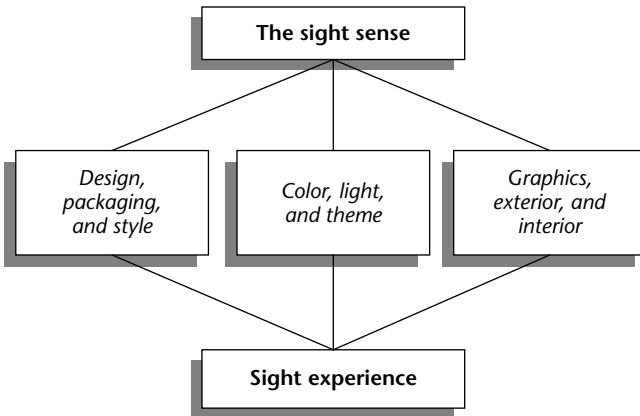


FIGURE 5.2 Sense expressions and the sight experience

Source: B. Hultén, N. Broweus, and M. van Dijk, *Sinnesmarknadsföring* (Malmö: Liber AB, 2008).

## Design, packaging, and style

*Design* as a sense expression for aesthetics is more important than ever in sensory marketing; it can be seen as the ultimate expression of our individualization as humans. For that reason, marketing's aesthetics in the binary society more and more emphasize soft values. It is no longer only the functionality of a brand that makes it attractive but also its ability to satisfy emotional, sensual, and personal needs.

In this way design, as an aesthetic expression, offers a firm or a brand the possibility to create an emotional sight experience. It has also been said that design is the most potent expression of a brand's identity, especially when an individual's quest for personal quality of life and welfare is symbolized through different brands.<sup>4</sup> Often in this case design is vital to the personal sensory experience. Thus, if a product is to be successful in becoming part of our daily life, in addition to its functional attributes and features, it should be nicely designed and comfortable to touch, and it should fit into the environment.

We therefore claim that in the binary society, expressions of design, originality, and beauty must be evident for us to find our surroundings congenial, whether at home, in the car on the way to work, in the office, or on the workshop floor. When every person is accustomed to being with different products and brands daily, those products and brands come to be seen as a completely natural part of everyday life as well as working life.

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**Design expresses a brand's personality, with which the individual identifies**

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Of course, it is much easier to choose, to become accustomed to, and to experience a brand relationship that appeals to us when the brand fits into our personal or professional surroundings and brightens our life. In this regard design as an expression of aesthetics and delight locates the sense experience in our everyday life. Often the aesthetic and functional elements of a brand are combined, with the result that the function is experienced as simpler, more attractive, or smarter.

In this respect, the elitism that existed during earlier decades has in the binary society been replaced by the notion that aesthetics and beauty should be available to everyone. Design was once associated with high price and exclusivity for certain brands; this still might be the case with cosmetics and fashion, for example, but the situation

today is often the opposite in the case of products such as cars, computers, and mobile phones. Now design, together with low price, is seen as a condition for establishing a brand long term and sustainably in the minds of customers. For that reason, design as a sense expression is to be found in nearly all product areas so that customers are offered an attractive sight experience.

Thus, design is of vital importance in a firm's sensory marketing and the tactics it uses to create competitive advantage for both soft and hard products. In the latter case it is a permanent challenge to make high-tech products such as cars, computers, and mobile phones more "human." This has led to design nowadays being considered one of the most important expressions for the individualization and personalization of a firm's brand.

We illustrate this point with an example from Nokia, the Finnish producer of mobile phones.

#### **Design As the Soul of the Product**

Nokia is one of the world's leading producers of mobile phones and has chosen to design its phones with soft values in mind in order to appeal to the human senses. The main rationale has been to move away from the hard values that technology conventionally stands for. This has been a way to make Nokia's mobile phones more user-friendly by giving each product an identity and a soul. Nokia's big screen and soft buttons have been designed for this purpose, and the ability to change the color of a phone suggests increased individualization.

The Nokia case illustrates how design in a mass market can contribute to individualizing and personalizing industrial, mass-produced goods – that is, mass customization. This should be seen in contrast to the standardization and mass production of goods that started in modern industrial society. Nowadays, emotions and values are united with logic and rationality in the customer's sensory experiences.

From a gender perspective, the importance of design is different for men and for women. This can be illustrated with an example from the Swedish retail chain Computer City, which offers computers that are pink alongside its black-and-white models. The reason is that design is regarded as very important for female customers, for whom

it is considered necessary to have computers in different colors in the product range.<sup>5</sup>

It is evident that design is used to clarify and express a firm's or a brand's personality. The designer Ola Granlund of Saab, which is part of U.S. General Motors, says that the concept of design as personality can be applied not only to the visual strength of the company's latest car, the Saab 9-3, as a whole but also to all the components used in production. This concept encompasses everything from ideas taken from aircraft, to Nordic design with clean, distinct lines, to innovative thinking.<sup>6</sup>

Design is also used to revive memories from the past among older generations. The term "retro" is applied to such design.<sup>7</sup> These older generations often want to go back to the time of their youth, when their faith in the future and their optimism were growing. Marketers are thus using nostalgia in the development of new products – as the German car maker Volkswagen showed with its new Beetle in the late 1990s. For fashion products, the term "retro" has been applied to the renaissance of bell-bottoms, khaki textiles, and classic dark blue jeans, for example.

**“ The package works as communicator, creator of identity, and image builder ”**

*Packaging* as a sense expression plays a decisive role in clarifying the identity of a brand for many consumer goods. One of the main purposes of a package is to be seen to best advantage by customers making a purchase, when it often takes only a second to observe the goods. For a package to succeed, it should be built upon a combination of emotional and functional attributes.<sup>8</sup>

The best-known example of a successful package is Coca-Cola's glass bottle, which is frosted and has a green tint. Other well-known examples are the transparent glass bottle of Absolut Vodka and the plastic bottle for Heinz Tomato Ketchup.

The important role of the package as an experience trigger reinforces the need for a continuous renewal of design, form, colors, and textures. For this reason a package should be seen as a communication tool when considering how to bring to mind a brand's identity and values. It is obvious that the package is the most important expression in terms of distinguishing a new product and contributes to the customer's emerging interest and curiosity. In this regard the package

in itself makes the product into a sensory experience through, for example, its shape or graphics.

The physical space available on packaging to create brand awareness and build brand image is normally limited. All this creates special requirements to develop visual expressions that can gain attention. An example is the French cosmetic producer Givenchy's red lipstick: Many women want to have a mirror to hand when the lips are to be painted, and for that purpose a mirror is built in to Givenchy's lipstick.

A package can also be used with the purpose of storytelling or of inspiring customers to create their own stories and myths. It is common for beverage packages, especially for wine, spirits, and beer, to be associated with specific events or places in order to create such a story, as the following example illustrates.

### **The Symbolic Value of a Wine Label**

On a bottle of Mystery Cliffs, a French Chardonnay, a label from 1997 depicts the high rocky coast of California with a lone pine standing out on a ledge. In this way, the package conveys how exotic and exciting the wine is.

In creating a sight experience, a package can be seen as both a container and a message.<sup>9</sup> Most packages act as brand representatives on the shelves of stores and supermarkets, where they are competing with other packages for physical space. To succeed, a package must mediate and clarify a brand's identity and soul.

A product's identity can be changed and renewed simply by giving the package a different shape, color, or texture. When classic consumer commodities such as food and clothes have to be adapted to new cultures, lifestyles, and values, the design of the package is crucial to the final sight experience. The renewal of the packaging without changing the basic character of the product is a crucial part of maintaining brand identity.

Moreover, a package has to give legal information about manufacturer, quantity, volume, weight, nutritional content and value, and the EAN code, which many customers consider important. Of course, this also affects the sight experience.

Poja Sham at Packaging Media Lab claims that 60 percent of the choice of a product is dependent upon the package.<sup>10</sup> In the laboratory, brand manufacturers and retail chains can conduct tests of which packages create attraction and attention among customers by using a tracker to study eye movements. The tracker uses infrared rays to register when a customer's glance suddenly stops and observes something. If a package gets more than two seconds' attention, the chances increase that it will be taken out for further inspection of its shape, color, and texture.

*Style* as a sense expression for a firm, a brand, or a store often expresses the firm or the brand in terms of its basic values. The Swedish retailer IKEA, with its blue and yellow logotype, represents itself as the Swedish welfare state, where all Swedes should go to realize their dreams of furnishing their homes at the lowest prices. The style of IKEA is thus characterized by economy and smart solutions and by the notion that frugality is a virtue. The department stores are marked by their simplicity and lack of fussiness, and customers can dine inexpensively on Swedish meatballs in the restaurant.

A style can therefore be characterized along dimensions that are related to complexity (minimalism versus decoration), description (realism versus abstraction), movement (dynamism versus stasis), and strength (loud and strong versus soft and weak).<sup>11</sup>

## Color, light, and theme

*Color* as a sense expression plays a major role in the individual's sight experience. It is generally acknowledged that color contributes to creating emotions and feelings. It is also known that colors affect the central nervous system and the cerebral cortex, which means that colors might activate and stimulate our memories, thoughts, and experiences. In addition, the right color can contribute to defining a firm's logotype and products, which helps customers recognize the brand later.

In the same way, an unclear choice of color impairs a firm's information and communication exchange with its customers. In particular, it makes it more difficult to create brand awareness and build a sustainable brand image. It affects



Colors activate and stimulate our feelings and thoughts



all the sense expressions that contribute to visualizing what a firm or a brand should stand for. Colors as sense expressions and color choice can be used to create associations about the identity and values of a firm or a brand among customers.

Different colors have different, and significant, psychological effects that in turn create certain effects in the human body – for example, lower blood pressure and pulse. Colors also have cultural and social significance through their various associations. It is generally held that red has the greatest attraction value in logotypes, advertisements, and product offerings. Red attracts the eye and the sight sense fastest of all colors. It can be mentioned that red lipstick, which in itself is connected to red lips, is also associated with sex and seduction. This makes the color red provocative and challenging, as illustrated in politics through the use of the red rose as a logotype by the Swedish Social Democratic Party.

For most firms, the choice of color should be associated with and symbolize the identity and the values a brand stands for. Color choice should create in customers a positive frame of mind and facilitate the sight experience through, for example, logotypes, packaging, advertisements, TV commercials, and websites.

An example of a brand that makes easy associations for its customers is the U.S. tractor manufacturer John Deere. Green completely dominates in its branding, which expresses the link to the landscape and farming. In the same way, the name of the German Green Party, Die Grünen, offers a natural link to the environment.

Yellow is said to be the color that most easily attracts attention, because it is the lightest for the eye. For this reason, yellow is often used on traffic signs and in other security signage. This might contribute to a feeling of caution or worry, which leads to the color attracting more attention. This is also how the telephone book, nowadays called the Yellow Pages in many countries, gets attention. As a brand, this is an excellent example of how a color has become the most important element in creating an identity among many people.

In the world of newspapers, pink pages are used to distinguish business or sport news from public news. In this way, newspapers use color to help their readers find the pages of greatest interest to them easily and quickly. In Sweden the daily business newspaper *Dagens Industri* is an example of a brand that from the beginning has used pink to emphasize the difference between different types of news. Another



business newspaper, the British *Financial Times*, provides an example of how a color can be associated with the content and message of a newspaper.

A common opinion is that orange expresses kindness and that gray is associated with professionalism in terms of being conformist and serious. Similarly, pale blue is associated with calm and peace, and navy blue is associated with dependability.

The Swedish travel company Apollo, part of the Swiss Kuoni Travel Holding, works deliberately with colors in its visual communications. The chosen colors of the brand, blue and orange, are also used by two of its competitors, which could have a negative impact: There is a risk that it might be more challenging for Apollo sufficiently to differentiate itself from these other brands.

It is the general opinion among designers that colors affect frame of mind and mood. In this regard, a positive choice of color can contribute to improving the working environment for the employees of a firm or to improving a service landscape for customers.

The Swedish fashion chain Lindex works a lot with seasonal colors in its marketing strategy and tactics. The disadvantage of this approach is that a more standardized look is neglected, and thus communication could be unclear. On the other hand, this approach is positive in the sense that it conveys renewal and adaptability, and customers might notice the change of colors early in the season.

*Light and lighting* as sense expressions are often used to create attraction and attention with regard to changes in a service landscape. Different levels of lighting can differentiate areas in a service landscape instead of everything being bathed in a sea of light. Light and lighting are used to highlight a brand or a product for customers. Using light and color together can further accentuate and reinforce the customer's image of a brand.

Nowadays, lighting design is seen as a way for a firm or a brand to clarify its identity and its values. Many firms use lighting as one important element of the business idea in marketing their strategy and tactics. The trend is for light and lighting to combine high-tech, art, and entertainment.<sup>12</sup> The Swedish retail chain Kjell & Company is an example of a firm that tries to inspire its customers with the help of light.



In the world of newspapers, pink expresses the business world



## The Aura of the Store

In its latest stores, Kjell & Company has chosen to have a very powerful light outside the store and a lot of light inside. When customers walk around a shopping mall and look into half a dozen neighboring stores, it is the Kjell & Company store that has the strongest lighting. This approach was explained by the CEO in the following way: “But here we are doing wrong, because, according to all the experts, you should not light like this without having an acceptable base level of lighting. Then you should put a focus on certain products and product groups with spotlights to make them more attractive. But when we actually attract the customers with the whole store from the outside, there is no product inside the store that has more light than any other product.”<sup>13</sup>

It is generally agreed that appropriate lighting can create an appropriate mood, which in itself attracts and captures the customer’s interest. One important reason to use lighting in design is that it offers the possibility of variation, so one can change the service landscape from time to time. An example of variation is to use dark and light surfaces, unlit and lit surfaces, and white and colored light in the same landscape. The Swedish athletic store Stadium XXL in Gothenburg provides an example of how lighting can be used to create variation in the service landscape. For example, in the shoe department the lighting tries to reflect different seasons. In the spring, green lighting is used, and yellow lighting can be added during the fall. In fact, the lighting in the store was discussed even before the construction plan.

“ Light and lighting can wake the human senses and strengthen a brand ”

One difficulty faced by huge department stores with a high roof is to create an inviting atmosphere for the service landscape built upon variation. This is often more difficult because there is only general, cold roof lighting, whereas individual lighting with spotlights could be an interesting alternative way to offer an inviting atmosphere. On the other hand, the German grocery retailer Lidl uses only naked strip lights in the service landscape to communicate its low prices to customers.<sup>14</sup>

Lighting also offers the possibility for a store to change the color of products: It is not necessary to light floors and walls in the same way as the goods. It is also possible to highlight different categories of goods by using different colors of light. This is very common in grocery retailing, where meat is often displayed under red lighting, which has a low color temperature. Low color temperature refers to warm light, and high color temperature refers to cold light. The principle is that cold lighting better emphasizes light-colored products and warm-colored products are better supported by warm lighting.

The higher the color temperature a firm chooses to highlight a brand, the colder will be the colors it uses. An example of this is the Swedish fashion chain Lindex, which has chosen to increase the color temperature to stress the cleanness and whiteness of underwear. In the same way, cold colors are used for fish counters to stress the white color of the fish, which would not fit with warm colors – that is, with a low color temperature.

At the American grocery retailer Whole Foods, the lighting of the stores is prominent and strategic. For example, fish is often lit up with colder light than meat, as meat has to look red. Similarly, the lighting is important for fruit and vegetables: Tomatoes should not look gray and dull. The lighting of the company's stores is not industrial in character. Industrial lighting is based on naked strip lights, which create a uniform and boring atmosphere in the service landscape. Industrial lighting also ensures that every customer is brightly lit, which can be experienced as annoying and disturbing by the individual.

“ Lighting is to be considered prominent and strategic ”

Lighting can also affect how customers perceive the size of a product or a service landscape. Julia Engberg, lighting designer at InWhite in Sweden, says the following regarding lighting and size:

How the size of a store or a product is perceived depends on where and how the lighting is placed. Lighting in the top of the ceiling together with lighting in the rear part of the store creates a depth and a height. Moreover, the lighting should follow the shape of a room to create a good light experience.

Light and lighting are of great importance if a brand is to be optimally exposed. A common problem is having the right lighting in fitting rooms for clothes, especially when different products need different kind of light in order to be optimally displayed. Radio frequency identification (RFID) technology, which is used in clothing tags, makes it possible to identify goods or individuals. It could be used in the future to adjust the light to suit the clothes customers bring with them into the fitting room.

*Theme* as a sense expression concerns the message a firm or a brand wants to bring to mind in creating an identity. Themes give customers something they can get attached to or fall back on, often as reference points. Usually these reference points are to be found in a firm's name or brand – for example, as a logotype – or through visual elements and other symbols in advertising and TV commercials.<sup>15</sup>

The main difference between past and current advertising and TV commercials is the emphasis on the emotional as well as the informative (or rational) message. It is no longer enough for firms to push out only a commercial message to their customers; instead, firms must try to make a brand attractive to customers through emotional interaction. In this regard, the Internet may create the emotional interaction, and advertising is becoming more and more a multidimensional tool for dialogue and communication. In particular, Internet usage suggests that customers themselves are searching for possibilities for emotional interactions with different brands.

**“ A theme must attract customers through emotional interaction ”**

Theme as a sense expression does not necessarily mean a lot of color and dramatic visual messages in advertising. Simplicity can also be a suitable strategy in certain situations, for example when rational messages are transmitted. The Swedish airline company Scandinavian Airlines (SAS) has, in recent years, chosen to use simple advertisements with few colors and a clear focus on the product's straightforward terms. The fierce competition in a market that includes many low-cost operators, such as EasyJet and Ryan Air, is the main reason the rational message has been highlighted.

Firms can use different themes to express different aspects of their culture, such as time (traditional or futuristic), historical association (avant-garde, classical, or retro), space (city/countryside, north/south,

or east/west), technology (natural, high-tech, or artificial), originality (original or imitation), and sophistication (cheap, exclusive, personal, or for everybody).<sup>16</sup>

## Graphics, exterior, and interior

*Graphics* as a sense expression deals with the issue of designing a logotype, a name, a word, or a symbol that clarifies and expresses a firm's identity and values. There is no doubt that leading brands, such as Coca-Cola, H&M, IKEA, and Nike, are recognized through the names and the symbols these companies have chosen.

The visualization of a brand can be expressed in a word, a figure, or both. No legal barriers exist to registering a trade mark within the European Union. A trade mark expressed as a word is called a "word mark" and can consist of one or more words or the names of people, such as Benetton or Volvo. It is also possible to combine letters and figures; the Swedish TV channel TV4 is an example.

A word mark secures broad protection by being registered in a standard, plain font and format, but it is also possible to register using a particular font. In this case, the trade mark is called a "figure mark," and figure marks often contain a figure of some kind in combination with a word.

It is also possible to protect a brand by emphasizing the product itself or the package that surrounds the product. In this case, the trade mark is called an "outfit mark." Bottles for perfumes or spirits are often outfit marks.

One of the best examples of a graphic symbol that has become a brand virtually worldwide in recent years on the Internet is the "smiley". This symbol was created at the beginning of the 1980s, when there was a concern that hypothetical events discussed in different forums on the Internet would be taken to be real events. Professor Scott Fahlman suggested that the following combination of punctuation symbols should be used to indicate a joke: :-). Since then, different emoticons have been created. The common denominator is the use of different symbol combinations to express emotions and feelings. Emoticons have become an important part of digital communication because they allow an emotional state to be conveyed simply and quickly.

“ Who doesn't recognize the symbol ☺? ”

*Interior and exterior* as sense expressions deal with the layout a firm chooses to clarify its identity and its values. The outer facade of a store is an example of an exterior sense expression; an interior sense expression is, for example, how a service landscape is presented and performed in shops, offices, or department stores.

Many firms use buildings to illustrate their values and create an image around the company. The Apple Store in Manhattan is an example of a futuristic store. It looks like a glass cube that sticks up aboveground, but the store itself is situated underground. The only thing to be seen aboveground is a lit-up Apple logotype hanging free inside the glass cube.

### The Sensual Storefront Display

Provocative challenges such as “desire me,” “love me,” “understand me,” and “discover me” are presented in the storefront of the fashion retailer Bodhi to mediate and express a tone of sensuality. It is a deliberate strategy to vary the storefront display, and during October 2007 the window display was pink, to reflect the Swedish cancer campaign The Pink Band.

The outer facade also comprises entrances, doors, and the storefront. The storefront is one of the most important communication platforms to clarify and bring to mind a brand’s identity and values. A traditional storefront showcases different goods through samples and prices, but it is also common for a brand’s identity and values to be clarified in other ways. This is illustrated here with an example taken from the Swedish fashion chain Bodhi in Stockholm.<sup>17</sup>

It is now also possible to use the storefront not only for display purposes but to let customers shop directly through the window. In the Ralph Lauren store in Manhattan, this option has been offered to customers as a pilot project that started in relation to the U.S. Open in 2006. In this sense, window-shopping means that the pane of glass works as a touch screen (a method of marketing that uses touch as one of the five human senses).

“ To use the storefront for shopping and not only looking ”

Customers activate pictures on the screen to access information about the products on display that they are interested in. A computer

screen is projected on to the inside of the window, and a credit card device is installed on the outside of the window. Customers who want to make a purchase do not have to go into the store; they order on the street and have the products sent home. Customers who want to pay later can order via e-mail and make the payment on the Internet.

*Interior* as a sense expression is often called “interior branding.” The creation of an interior that links to the products reinforces the sight experience. The essential idea is that the service landscape has to clarify and visualize the elements that contribute to a brand’s identity. This might, for instance, happen through the use of specially designed background surroundings, shelving systems, cashiers desks, or other nonverbal symbols to establish associations with the customer’s interests and lifestyles.<sup>18</sup>

The Swedish researcher Jens Nordfält claims that the layout of a store and how the goods are arranged affect the customer’s decisions about purchasing products:

If the wall behind the cereals is painted red, the chance increases that you will perceive the price as low. It might seem even cheaper if the passage is narrow and the lighting sharp. If, on the other hand, the wall is blue and the light is warm, you will probably assume that the cereals are of good quality although the price seems to be higher. This happens despite the fact that it is the same cereals at the same price.

If you are right-handed, the odds are high that you will buy, say, shampoo by taking the product that is on the right-hand side of the best-sellers on the shampoo shelf. And in that space the store gladly deploys its sales goods with higher margins – most customers are right-handed.<sup>19</sup>

It is relatively rare for a service landscape to be divided into different rooms where consideration can be given to how different products should be exposed in the best way. But in the Swedish retailer Brobergs (earlier Brobergs Tobacco Store), there is a special room for cigars where shoppers can choose the brands they like. The room is characterized by high humidity to let the smells and tastes of the cigars live on for a longer period without losing their identity.

In the creation of attractive interiors, different ways of exhibiting products are seen as important in triggering the sight sense. In

construction, paint, interior decoration, and furniture stores, the general opinion is that displays are among the most important elements in clarifying and mediating a brand's identity. There is no doubt that the growing interest in design among people has led to more and more customers emphasizing the importance of having products fit into an individual, social context.

“ Displays are crucial in mediating a brand's identity ”

A display should, for that reason, offer customers a feeling of inspiration and problem-solving in relation to the private home. This calls for a firm to emphasize lighting, to assemble furniture and equipment in the right way, and to make it possible for customers to buy all displayed products in the store. At the Swedish retailer IKEA, this is clearly demonstrated, and all products on the shelves of the stores are for sale.

## THE FORMATION OF THE SERVICE LANDSCAPE

### The down-to-earth

We claim that the formation of the service landscape is among the most important challenges of sensory marketing in visualizing a firm's or a brand's identity and values. For us, the concept of down-to-earth formation deals with how a shop, an office, or a department store is presented to the customers in daily contact. It concerns how the service landscape is designed and experienced with regard to sense expressions such as exterior and interior.

Our research shows that more and more firms are attaching importance to the down-to-earth formation of the service landscape and using many different expressions to trigger the sight sense. One of the reasons for this is the increased competition among different retail and service firms. Furthermore, many firms market and sell the same well-known brands from suppliers such as Adidas, Canon, Heinz, LG Electronics, Nestlé, Nike, Samsung, and Unilever in many branches.

We believe that a major reason the down-to-earth formation has become more important is the transition from emphasizing the product's attributes and features in the supply chain to more strongly emphasizing aesthetics, emotions, and experiences in the retail and



service chains. It is more obvious than ever that the power struggle between brand manufacturers and retail chains affects the formation and the layout of the service landscape as well as how customers identify themselves in relation to this landscape. In this regard, and particularly because it is interactive and multidimensional, digital technology also plays a significant role in developing and expressing different sense expressions.

We illustrate this reasoning by giving an example of how the down-to-earth formation of the service landscape clarifies a firm's identity and values. The Swedish retail chain Home Evening started in 2005 as a challenger to traditional video stores. One important feature of the chain's identity has been to create a profile that is more related to a fashion store and a shopping experience than to a shop that sells only videotapes.

### **At Home at Home Evening**

Key to the Home Evening chain has been the demand for flexibility and continuous change in the various elements of its service landscape. The trade is characterized by fast-moving goods and a continuous supply of new products, where new needs and customers are created all the time. This leads to constant demands to change interior and exterior as sense expressions in triggering the sight sense. Bearing in mind customer flows and the characteristics of its brightly colored media products, the company has shaped a down-to-earth service landscape that is built upon a combination of sense expressions.

The logotype of Home Evening is the starting point for a clear-cut range of colors, where white is the base. But for all media products, black is chosen as the background, which is then mixed with orange and yellow for the back wall and details. The lighting changes, and the digital display screen communication is centralized, which allows variation from day to day. All the walls can slide, and there are mobile floor racks in the landscape for built-in flexibility.

Moreover, there is a café at the shop window where customers can buy a cup of coffee and freshly baked cinnamon buns, which create a pleasant smell in the service landscape. There is also an integrated cash desk and food counter, at two different levels, where customers can sit down and look for the latest film and music news on the computers provided. In addition, there is a well-defined separate chill-out corner where kids and teenagers can sit down and watch the latest movies.

There is no doubt that the formation of the service landscape allows space for and emphasizes customers' active participation. Customers are seen as an important part of the landscape, and their presence mediates the identity of a firm or a brand in terms of the people it attracts and represents. For this reason, customers have become a more important part of the display in a service landscape. It is time to talk about displaying customers, and not only in terms of them wearing a peaked cap with the name of the brand.

It is also well known that the formation of the service landscape determines whether sales targets are reached. For the Swedish grocery retailer ICA Ahold, the "customer circuit" is one of the most important concepts in terms of sales success. The customer circuit is built upon the idea of how customers move in a store and how the placement of goods affects a customer's purchasing behavior. An old, well-known trick is to place the milk far from the store's entrance so that customers have to pass all the products they had not thought of buying when they entered the store.

In addition to the customer circuit and the placement of goods, the lighting, flooring, color, walls, and scents are also important elements in the formation of the service landscape. Decoration can also help customers find their way through the store. Moreover, it is commonly held that decoration should reflect a firm's or a brand's identity and values in terms of being, for example, cheap or expensive, functional or emotional, and traditional or futuristic.

In a survey published in the Swedish business magazine *Dagens Handel* during 2006, one result was that many Swedish store managers wanted to know more about how to succeed in expressing the formation of the service landscape. It was a general opinion among the 221 managers interviewed that a store's decoration is of great importance with regard to sales and that the impressions of customers are the most important aspect of this. Nearly half of the people interviewed indicated that they needed advice and tips about how, for example, lighting, decoration, and color schemes could be worked out. It was said that store managers know the company's goods and services well but are not so well-informed and educated when it comes to questions about interior in general.<sup>20</sup>

Store managers, in improving and developing the service landscape, asked for innovations such as computer systems, lighting, shelf systems, color schemes, and displays. The last four types of innovation are of particular relevance to the interior of the service landscape.

## The virtual

The virtual formation of the service landscape has its starting point in digital technology – mainly the Internet, websites, and homepages. There is no doubt that the virtual service landscape has contributed to the increasing importance of sensory marketing. More than anything, it offers individuals the possibility of satisfying their need for emotional as well as rational experiences on their own time and in their own space.

For this reason, the virtual landscape has become a place where the individual's integrity and independence are in focus. We believe that digital technology has enormous potential for a firm when it needs to clarify and visualize a brand. A firm's ability to combine high-tech with "high-touch" – that is, to connect feelings with technology – is the basis for creating an emotional experience for the individual.<sup>21</sup> But it can also lead to a rational experience, especially because time is a scarce resource for many individuals.

**“ A brand must connect high-tech with high-touch ”**

In the binary society many individuals want to invest more time on activities other than purchasing and shopping. They want their daily routines to be carried out simply and quickly when it comes to purchasing commodities, for example. At the same time, shopping can take place anytime and anywhere in the virtual landscape, without any physical presence in the down-to-earth service landscape.

Because of this, the Internet is used to get answers to questions individuals have about things, goods, and services. It is not always clear what needs an individual has, how these needs should be satisfied, or which brand can solve the individual's problem. For this reason, people often use different search terms to try to get answers to their questions, which is another indication that there are no set answers to the problem an individual wants to solve. In this case problem-solving is based upon intellect and emotions as well as logic and rationality, which emphasizes the importance of the virtual landscape in a sensory marketing framework.

In this framework, the virtual landscape is based upon a website where a firm clarifies and visualizes its identity and values to create brand awareness and build a brand image. Countless possible combinations of sense expressions such as color, graphics, interior,

and exterior exist to attract the sight sense. Such sense expressions, in combination with music or voices, then offer customers a multidimensional sensory experience.

## THE BRAND AS SIGHT EXPERIENCE

From our research, one conclusion is that fashion and clothing retailers, for whom the clarification of identity and values is of great importance, are among the most visual firms. The younger the target customer groups, the more significant is the question of how a firm and a brand should be clarified in creating brand awareness and building a sustainable brand image in relation to the five human senses. Often this involves a combination of emotional and rational elements, expressed through the use of different sense expressions to trigger the sight sense.

We have chosen the American lifestyle company Abercrombie & Fitch as an example of how different sight expressions can contribute to a visualization of a brand as a sight experience.

### **Abercrombie & Fitch – A Sensory Sight Strategy**

Abercrombie & Fitch describe themselves on their homepage as “the most successful specialty retailer in operation today. . . . The A & F culture is one of a kind. . . . A & F’s brand-powered momentum is fueled by additional lifestyle reinforcement. Every aspect of our stores – the music, the marketing and photos, the overall aesthetics – has made the in-store experience more potent than ever.” A visit to the London store illustrates this.

The exterior of the store is authentic and is experienced as exclusive and magnificent. In the entrance itself, customers are met by two good-looking and well-trained guys stripped to the waist.

The store’s interior is dominated by dark wood colors for the furniture and walls. On the walls are a number of pictures, including modern black-and-white pictures of relaxing environments as well as older paintings to offer a historical feeling. The curtains are white and contrast with the dark interior.

The lighting of the down-to-earth service landscape is dim and characteristic of a nightclub. For the clothes and some other products, there are spotlights. Apart from these, the store is fairly dark.

There are big open spaces as well as rooms and departments in the store. The service landscape is enlivened with palms, which contribute to the elegance of the store's layout. In addition, a big moose head brings to mind the company's logotype, which is also a moose.

The staff have a prominent role in the service landscape and they are seen everywhere. They greet the customers, nod, and move in time to the music, which adds to the impression of a disco. The cordiality of the staff makes them seem like a team of friends who enjoy working together and who enjoy the lifestyle of the company.

To express the identity and values of the brand, the personnel are dressed in A & F clothes: a T-shirt, piké, and on top of that a long-sleeved sweatshirt. Their jeans and flip-flops are also from the company's collection and fit in with the lifestyle and feeling of simplicity, relaxation, and delight the brand wants to promote.

The overall design and style of the service landscape symbolize the natural and the down-to-earth, as well as the athletic and the sporty. This is also emphasized by, for example, the use of canoes as store decoration. In addition, perfume and accessories are available in elegant and charming packages that follow the overall identity and values of the brand in creating a successful sight experience.

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## THE TASTE SENSE

*Taste is often considered the individual's supreme sensory experience*

This chapter begins with a discussion of the taste sense and its more or less hidden role in marketing. It highlights different sense expressions to facilitate a taste experience and how tastes can be used in sensory marketing. Finally, the British retail chain Hotel Chocolat is presented as an example of the brand as taste experience.

### TASTELESS MARKETING

#### The forgotten sense

The “Swedish food rebel” City Gross handed out grocery bags to households when the company was established in Norrköping, Sweden, in the spring of 2007. The bags contained beverages, bread, sandwich spread, and fruits. A courier delivered the commodities, and the recipients met a face behind the brand.

The Swedish food retail business is marked by sharp competition. One common competitive measure firms use to attract customers' attention is low prices, often through direct marketing, advertisements, or offers.

City Gross's marketing activity was different from the traditional method of reaching customers. The company approached customers in a personal way that differed markedly from the impersonal marketing which characterizes this trade. Customers literally got a taste of the brand, and customer treatment became more personal.

This was an innovative expression of sensory marketing to improve the image of City Gross. It can be seen as an example of tactical marketing to enhance awareness of the brand in the long term.

Traditionally, the presence of the taste sense in marketing has been limited to demonstrations and tastings: demo kitchens in grocers'

stores; hair stylists, opticians, or car resellers offering coffee to their customers. Generally, the taste sense is neglected in marketing, which undermines the aim of creating brand awareness and establishing a sustainable brand image.

We believe that most trades are characterized by tasteless marketing, and only a few firms appeal to the taste sense to strengthen their image and identity. A brand seldom tastes, with the exception of certain firms that naturally target the taste sense with their products.

**“ Tastelessness dominates too many branches of marketing ”**

One such exception is the U.S. coffee chain Starbucks, where coffee is central. Starbucks aims to convey a taste experience and lifestyle that many individuals want to identify with. Not only the taste of coffee but the whole concept, with its focus on pleasure and well-being, contributes to the product and the image of Starbucks.

Other strong brands naturally associated with the taste sense usually promote themselves through traditional methods such as advertisements, TV commercials, and direct marketing. But how often do customers literally get a taste of these brands' marketing? Too seldom, in our opinion. Mass marketing is characterized by adjectives such as “good,” “tasty,” “low-fat,” and “healthy.” Such messages may be seen as passably rational, but the purpose is to express emotional values. To bring out emotional values fully, something more is needed, such as letting customers actually taste the brand.

Sometimes it is argued that customers are the reason the taste sense is seldom targeted in marketing. Both product development and marketing in the food and beverage industry could be revolutionized if customers were better able to describe and express their taste preferences and sensory experience. But people are more or less unaware of what controls their taste preferences.<sup>1</sup>

The U.S. oral care company Colgate is reliant to some extent on the unique taste of its toothpastes. However, the company has not been consistent regarding tastes across the whole product line, which includes toothbrushes and dental floss. Nevertheless, Colgate is perceived to be one of the leading brands when it comes to the taste of its products.<sup>2</sup>

Firms whose products are naturally associated with the taste sense have an advantage in marketing to this sense. However, there are good opportunities for firms in other trades to address tastes.



## Sensitive taste buds

Tastes are mainly perceived through the taste buds on the tongue, although there are taste buds in the palate and throat, too. A newborn child has the best taste capacity: babies even have taste buds on the inside of their cheeks. Adults have about 10,000 taste buds that register and send information to the nerve cells that transmit signals to the brain. Women have more taste buds than men and are generally more sensitive to tastes.

“ It is not the tongue that determines and perceives the taste, rather the floating constituents in the human’s body ”

The taste buds look like small volcanoes. They are involved in detecting four types of taste: salty, sour, sweet, and bitter, which are perceived in different ways on different parts of the tongue (Figure 6.1).

For instance, a lump of sugar does not taste as sweet under the tongue as on the tongue. Sweetness is best perceived on the tip of the tongue. The taste of salt, on the other hand, is perceived on the whole

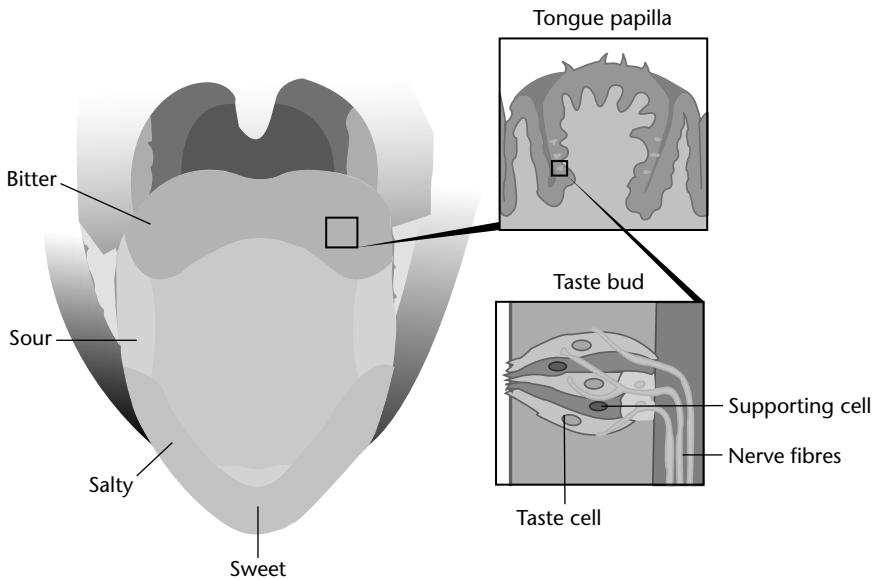


FIGURE 6.1 The tongue’s taste buds

Source: Bild & Form Jonny Hallberg.

tongue. On the back of the tongue we perceive bitter tastes, and on the sides we perceive sour tastes. More recently, umami (or “savory”) has been included as the fifth basic taste, associated for example with anchovy, soy sauce, and fish sauce.

Taste buds work hard, and they are quickly worn out: in just over a week they are replaced by new ones. At around the age of fifty this renewal process slows down, and the palate becomes weaker over the years. Thus, as we age, some capacity for taste is lost, and more intense tastes are required to reach the same perception level as before. Thus, older people may readily enjoy the tastes of beer and whiskey – beverages whose taste is often perceived as too strong by younger people. For candy, the situation is reversed: children’s tongues are sensitive to sugar because their taste sense has not been blunted by many years of eating; therefore, candies and other sweet things are perceived as tastier by children than by adults.

The taste buds are able to detect different tastes at different concentrations: sweetness is detected at 1 part in 200; saltiness at 1 part in 400; sour substances at just 1 part in 130,000; and bitterness in as little as 1 part in 2 million.

## Heritage and upbringing

The taste sense is one of the most distinctly emotional senses.<sup>3</sup> This is often expressed in everyday life in phrases such as “a matter of taste,” “a bitter story,” “sour,” and “sweet.”

Because it is not possible to taste something from a distance, the taste sense is called “the intimate sense.” It is as individual as our fingerprints. People who like salty food have saltier saliva than others because their mouths are used to a higher sodium concentration. Each person’s saliva is unique; its makeup depends, among other things, on genetic heritage and what kind of food they eat.<sup>4</sup>

“

The taste sense is individual and is controlled by the composition of one’s saliva

”

A child’s future taste preferences are influenced even in the womb. Researchers at London’s University College studied the extent to which a child’s taste preferences depend on heritage.<sup>5</sup> The study, published in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* in 2007, analyzed the eating habits of more than 5,000 British pairs of twins aged 8–11. The results were that 78 percent of taste preferences depend on one’s genes.

The researchers also found that genes differentially influence our unwillingness to try different kinds of food. For desserts genes play just a small role in this unwillingness, 20 percent, whereas for protein-rich food such as fish and beans genetic influence is 78 percent. For fruit and vegetables genetic heritage determines 51 and 37 percent, respectively, of the unwillingness to try new food. Even the food children eat during growth affects future taste preferences. The study showed that 22 percent of future preferences depend on environment and learning. The results were the same for boys and girls.

In an interview, Annika Åström of the Swedish Institute for Food and Biotechnology noted that upbringing is significant for taste preferences. This is confirmed by studies revealing that children who have eaten a wide variety of foods are often more curious about other kinds of food than children brought up on restricted diets. Thus, the taste sense is stimulated by, and can be trained by, different impressions. It is believed that children must experience the same taste twenty times to become familiar with it,<sup>6</sup> which can be relevant to marketers.

Moreover, the mood and humor of an individual can affect eating habits. For instance, pressure causes some people to eat and others to stop eating.

The taste sense is primarily a social sense and is not experienced to its best when we are alone.

We prefer to eat with others, and food facilitates social exchanges among people. The dinner table is often the natural gathering point in a home, where all kinds of social interactions take place. Similarly, much business is done over a so-called business lunch.

“

The taste sense is  
the most social sense  
and affects people's  
mood

”

## TASTE AS EXPERIENCE TRIGGER

We now discuss how tastes can be used as an experience trigger to establish the identity and image of a brand. Different sense expressions that can contribute to a taste experience are outlined in Figure 6.2.

### Interplay, symbiosis, and synergy

The senses of taste and smell are our chemical senses. Much of a taste experience, which can involve thousands of chemical reactions,

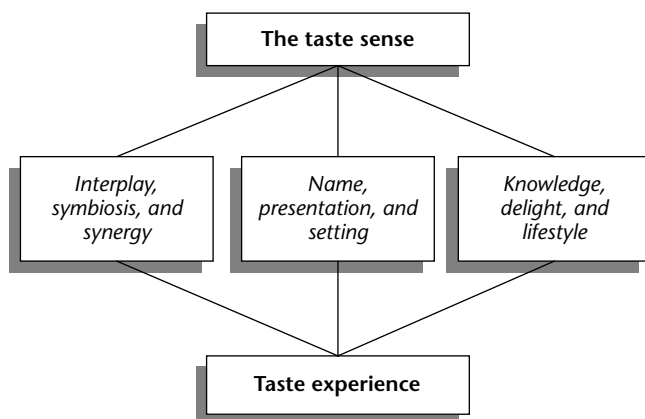


FIGURE 6.2 **Sense expressions and the taste experience**

Source: B. Hultén, N. Broweus, and M. van Dijk, *Sinnesmarknadsföring* (Malmö: Liber AB, 2008).

is influenced by the sense of smell. The smell sense is critical to the ability to discern tastes, as many of our taste perceptions are actually smell perceptions. If we cannot smell food, the perceived taste experience is reduced by up to 80 percent.<sup>7</sup>

Although the taste sense is considered the weakest human sense, it is said that the ancient Greeks and Romans could say what kind of water a fish came from just by its taste.

A taste experience can be generated in many situations and contexts.

For example, in 2002 the Florida Department of Citrus introduced an innovative campaign for Florida Grapefruit. The campaign was probably among the first in the United States for



**The taste sense and the smell sense combine to produce a good taste experience**



food and beverages in which a scent strip was used to create a dynamic and intense smell experience to convey the taste of drinking a glass of grapefruit juice. The advertisement showed a tall glass of refreshing ruby red grapefruit juice splashed across the surface of the newspaper. It conveyed the empowering taste of grapefruit juice with the messages “Taste the Kick” and “Reintroduce the word ‘zing’ into your vocabulary.”<sup>8</sup>

However, it is not only tastes and scents that are required to produce a taste experience. Sense expressions such as *interplay* and *symbiosis*

contribute to a *synergy* in the sensory experience of eating and drinking.<sup>9</sup> The fact that the taste experience builds on an interplay and synergies among the different senses was expressed by Annika Åström: “Customers call it taste, but it is everything: how it looks, smells, feels, and sounds. All this the customer more or less merges into the concept of ‘taste.’”

The taste a person perceives therefore includes much more than just the actual taste itself. The concept of “taste” is effectively an expression for the individual’s supreme sensory experience, as what is eaten and drunk is seen as the whole experience of a product, even its smell, sound, appearance, and texture. Put simply, taste is the entire sensory experience that results from the product being put into the mouth.

One example of the interplay among senses and its importance for a taste experience is the German restaurant Dunkel Keller in Berlin:

### A Sense-Rich Taste Experience

The restaurant Dunkel Keller takes the social and cognitive values to their extreme. The restaurant is blacked out to minimize visual impressions, which means that the other senses have to work harder. This emphasizes the taste experience, because one sense is strengthened if another gets weaker. Moreover, the blacked-out restaurant heightens the touch impressions from the cutlery and the porcelain, as well as the sound impressions from voices. The presence of other diners and the staff creates an experience for all the senses.

Thus, there are a great many opportunities to apply all the senses to create a taste experience. It is not enough to have a product that tastes good, as there is much more to do around it. Many such possibilities are left unexplored.



Taste can be seen as the individual’s supreme sensory experience



### Name, presentation, and setting

Restaurateurs, dieticians, and marketers can improve the taste experience of a dish by giving it a more evocative and descriptive *name* as

a sense expression. This has been shown to increase sales in restaurants by up to 27 percent.<sup>10</sup> One study showed, for example, that “Succulent Italian Seafood Filet” was more appealing than just “Seafood Filet”. Furthermore, dishes with evocative and descriptive names receive more positive comments; they are rated as more tasty, appealing, and nutritious than counterparts with regular names.



Interesting and exciting names for dishes increase sales and the taste experience



Descriptive and evocative names also increase our expectations of a restaurant and its food.<sup>11</sup> It is important to know this, because expectations and the perceived experience are often connected. Previous research in this area has mainly focused on health labels, warning labels, and nutritional labels. Much less research has been conducted into how expectations are affected by descriptions or names on food or beverage labels.<sup>12</sup>

It has also been shown that the listing of attributes, such as “reduced fat” and “Atkins approved,” can influence opinion about a product positively or negatively.<sup>13</sup> In one study, participants received one energy bar that purportedly contained soy protein and one energy bar that did not mention the word “soy” on its label. The bar that supposedly contained soy was rated as grainy and tasteless compared with the other bar. The mention of “soy” obviously biased the participants, as they perceived the taste and evaluated the energy bar on that basis.<sup>14</sup>

This shows how individuals can be affected psychologically using relatively simple methods and how it is possible to enhance the taste experience without too much effort. Whether or not a firm’s products have a natural association with the taste sense, concepts, names, and descriptions of food and beverages can be used strategically to emphasize the taste experience.

The *presentation* of food and beverages as a sense expression is important to the taste experience.<sup>15</sup> For example, the color of porcelain can affect an individual’s appetite and taste experience. One study in Ystad, Sweden, showed that serving white fish on a blue plate increased the appetite of older people. The contrast of colors is important when serving a meal. A steak can be served on a white plate, but porridge should not be served in a white bowl. More than one in every two plates sold by the kitchenware retailer Duka in Sweden are white; however, colors such as purple and amber are becoming more popular.<sup>16</sup>

The researchers Klose, Riga, Cramwinckel, and Saris claim that the name and presentation of a dish have to “fit the expectation”; the dish must have an “appetizing smell that fits the food,” a “good balance in flavor components in relation to the food,” the “presence of the umami,” a “combination of hard and soft textures,” and a high “flavor richness.”<sup>17</sup> These six factors are called “culinary success factors” and can be used to increase our knowledge of the tastes and elements that contribute to a taste experience. This knowledge can make it easier for chefs to create tasty dishes and enhance the taste experience of existing dishes. For firms that already implement tastes in sensory marketing, therefore, many factors should be taken into consideration to improve the taste experience.

Furthermore, sense expression as the *setting* where food and beverages are consumed is important for the taste experience. This was shown in one study in which participants ate identical dishes in different settings – from a geriatric care home to a four-star restaurant.<sup>18</sup> In the settings perceived as nicer, including the four-star restaurant, the experience was valued more highly than in the home for the elderly, for example. It should be noted that participants aged 18–35 were more critical than the middle-aged.

It is of great importance to create an interesting, exciting, and pleasing setting in sensory marketing. This enables differentiation, as the example of Dunkel Keller proves. Moreover, firms that use the taste sense in sensory marketing should bear in mind that the taste experience and the brand image must harmonize with the identity of the brand. In this philosophy, it is essential that the interiors, such as furniture and decoration, fit with the other elements in the service landscape,<sup>19</sup> which is confirmed by studies that show the importance of a pleasing interior for the taste experience in a restaurant.<sup>20</sup>

If the interior and design are not in harmony with the general environment and the brand image, the result could be as described by Mary-Jo Bitner:

Managers continually plan, build and change an organization’s physical surroundings in an attempt to control its influence on patrons, without really knowing the impact of a specific design or atmosphere change on its users.<sup>21</sup>

The taste experience depends on far more than just what food is served. The need for a pleasing setting in a service landscape is clear.

This is something that grocery stores, in particular, should take into consideration more often, as customers are in a setting where food and beverages are natural elements. There is great potential to create a taste experience out of the ordinary.

Despite these opportunities, most grocery stores do not succeed in creating a setting

“ A taste experience is dependent on the setting to taste good ”

that “breathes” food and beverages. In addition to visual expressions to get the customer’s attention, there should be more effort to stimulate the taste sense – for example, by offering more tastings and demonstrations.

Outside traditional demo kitchens, which are not staffed often enough, it is possible, for instance, to let customers taste exotic fruits that are unfamiliar to them. This is a simple way to inspire and help the customer in the purchase situation. At the same time it is a comparatively cheap way to produce a taste experience.

The Central Market in the United States uses “food advisors” who give customers tips and advice about products. Many of these advisors are former chefs, and they let customers taste and smell all food and beverages in the store. This is an excellent example of how the setting in a service landscape can “breathe” food and beverages.

Offering a taste experience – whether it is just snack foods or a whole dish – makes people smile, is energizing, and results in more positive body language. This enables interaction with the individual and therefore the possibility for a firm to increase sensitivity to its message. People’s humor and mood is something a firm can take advantage of.

### Knowledge, delight, and lifestyle

Our interest in the good things in life, including food and beverages, has increased at the beginning of the twenty-first century.<sup>22</sup> Enjoyment, well-being, and quality of life are concepts that are becoming more and more meaningful to many people. Our interest in food and beverages is often expressed in the formation of culinary groups, whose members get new experiences and increased knowledge.

“ Learning more about tastes improves the quality of the actual taste experience ”



It is not enough simply to experience pleasure; knowing what the enjoyment depends on can give an extra dimension to the taste experience. Thus, *knowledge* is a sense expression in this context, as illustrated by Åsa Östrom from the Department of Restaurant and Culinary Arts at Örebro University, Sweden:

How the taste of wine affects the taste of cheese, or how the taste of cheese affects the taste of wine, is more or less about combinations when we are eating. It is rather new within the sensorial to try combinations.

It is important to know how tastes can interact – for example, that eating the French cheese Brillat-Savarin with champagne gives the taste of chanterelle. Knowledge prepares the brain for this perception, which positively influences the taste experience. If the brain is not prepared for the perceptions it is exposed to, the taste experience will be less strong.<sup>23</sup> This is something that firms should be aware of when they try to create as good a taste experience as possible. Knowledge of how different tastes work together can make the firm more flexible and dynamic in creating a taste experience for its customers.



An unexpected combination of tastes can produce a positive taste experience



The reasons many people want to know more about why and how *delight* as a sense expression comes from food and beverages were explained in the Swedish daily newspaper *Svenska Dagbladet* in February 2005.<sup>24</sup> Many people now have less time to cook, but when they do have the time, they want to put more effort into cooking.

People are searching for greater knowledge of, and higher quality in, cooking. Knowledge also produces social status: in the same way we recommend music or movies to our friends, we would like to recommend different dishes or drinks.

Even in daily life, many people want to stimulate the taste sense outside of the main meal times. We chew on flavored chewing-gum, and we eat flavored cough drops even when we do not have a sore throat. It is often the good taste we crave, regardless of the moment or the situation. Firms can take advantage of this by using flavored taste strips which customers put into their mouths for a taste experience. Taste strips can be useful in products, in service landscapes, and in

direct marketing and advertisements in newspapers. The technology is called “Peel ‘n’ taste,” and the purpose is to give more dimensions to the message.

In the United States the trend is toward more extreme tastes. Tastes should be warmer, colder, sourer, or stronger than before. One example of this is *chipotle*, a smoked hot chili pepper often used by fast-food companies to ensure a persistent taste.<sup>25</sup> There is even an American fast-food chain named Chipotle.

Taste experiences are becoming more powerful in the same way as music is becoming louder, movies sexier, and TV programs more violent.<sup>26</sup> If the tastes make customers interested, curious, and emotional, the firms have succeeded.

The Cadbury Wispa provides an example where taste, without exaggeration, has engaged people’s emotions.

### Coveted Tastes

The confectionery company Cadbury became the subject of a petition on Facebook. Fourteen thousand members lobbied to restore the firm’s chocolate Wispa to the range of products. The popular chocolate had been around since the early 1980s, but it was removed from the range in 2003, to many people’s disappointment. Even on YouTube there have been actions to get the Wispa back: addicted fans have uploaded old Wispa commercials that extol the taste and excellence of the chocolate. The commitment of these enthusiasts persuaded Cadbury to reintroduce the chocolate, albeit in a limited edition for a trial period.

The fact that customers are clearly engaged by a specific taste shows how much the taste contributes to the product and the pleasure it produces. A similar case was noted in the Swedish media in the summer of 2007. A private individual started a campaign on the Internet to get Coca-Cola to import Cherry Coke to Sweden. There was speculation that this was just a PR trick by Coca-Cola, but the individual denied this.

Another example of engagement among Coca-Cola’s customers is the origin of Coca-Cola Vanilla. The company conducted qualitative and quantitative studies among Coca-Cola lovers to learn more

about their Coke-drinking habits and routines. It was found that some customers added vanilla flavor to their Cokes. This became one inspiration for Coca-Cola Vanilla.<sup>27</sup>

Thus, it is clear that tastes can be used as one way to express a person's identity and emphasize *lifestyle* as a sense expression. This is not limited to restaurants or other settings where the taste sense is naturally stimulated, as the exclusive New York culture magazine *Visionaire* proves.

**Browse among Tastes**

*Visionaire* creates art that widens the sensual horizons by stimulating the reader's eyes and taste buds. The edition that appeals to the taste sense is edible and consists of twenty-five taste strips, each with a different taste. To strengthen the taste experience, each taste is associated with pictures to trigger the imagination and intensify the sense perception. Associating tastes in this way with several sense expressions enables easier identification with a particular taste.

The reader gets, among other things, a sense of the taste of orgasm, identified by the tastes of truffle and chocolate together with pictures of attractive women and men. Guilt is characterized by a chocolate taste, and the taste of one's mother is reproduced by condensed milk and illustrated with a woman's breast.

**BRANDS WITH SPICE**

**Experiences and expectations**

Only some 16 percent of the Fortune 1000 brands apply tastes in marketing management practice.<sup>28</sup> Thus, any firm that applies tastes in sensory marketing has an opportunity to strengthen its brand and give it more dimensions to differentiate itself in the brand competition that surrounds customers.

**“ Fewer than two out of ten big brands use the taste sense ”**

The image of a brand is of great importance within the food and beverage industry. Many people perceive the products of strong brands as more reliable, higher quality, and more consistent than the products of lesser-known brands.

Strong and well-known brands also tend to make purchase decisions easier and improve loyalty and repeat business. There may even be a willingness to pay more for well-known and respected brands.<sup>29</sup>

An article in the Swedish newspaper *Dagens Handel* in August 2006 said that “Loved brands with new tastes sell most.”<sup>30</sup> The former Swedish–Finnish chocolate and sugar confectionery company Cloetta Fazer had increased its market shares in Sweden, Norway, Finland, and the Baltic states largely because of launches of the company’s well-known brands with new tastes. The article also mentioned that sales of chocolate will increase, mainly of products with subtle new flavors.

Just as the individual’s taste experience is essential in purchasing decisions and the perception of brands, so expectations are crucial. Expectations are clearly realized in the consumption situation, and probably even more so when it comes to food and beverages.

The fact that customers are influenced by expectations of brands was shown in a study by Biedekarken and Henneberg which tested twelve ice-creams available on the German market.<sup>31</sup> In the first part of the test, participants were not told which brand the products belonged to. All the participants liked the ice-creams, although the results showed a big difference in perceptions. Remarkably, a discount house brand was rated higher than some of the more expensive brands.

“ A well-known brand can be a loser in a blindfold test if the taste quality is too low ”

In the second part of the study, participants were asked to rate the ice-creams once more. However, this time they were told which brands the ice-creams belonged to. No other recognizable elements, such as logotypes, pictures, or packaging, were given. The ice-cream that had the lowest rating in the blindfold test was rated highest in the second part of the study when the brands were known. For the remaining ice-creams, brand knowledge contributed to a 21 percent higher rating of the products than in the blindfold test.

In the blindfold test, expectations and brand awareness positively influenced the taste experience when the brands were known. Thus, a strong brand can give the impression of better product quality and a better taste at the same time as it enables differentiation and higher pricing.<sup>32</sup>

In other words, the taste experience is not always based on the actual quality of a product. Rather, it is formed in the mind and heart

of the individual. Thus, the brand image is of great importance, not least when firms use similar marketing strategies or when a discount player offers a better-quality product. This was shown in the blindfold test with the ice-creams when the discount house brand was rated higher than one reputable, stronger brand.

The fact that former experiences and expectations are central to the taste experience was expressed by Annika Åström:

You have other expectations of, for instance, Coca-Cola or Virgin. There are classic studies that directly show the importance of the experience. Just for the reason a brand is strong, for example, a Coca-Cola drinker perceives it as different from other cokes. It is a perception – and it is, of course, used in marketing.

How expectations and brand image can influence customers was also shown in a study by researchers at Stanford University and the Lucile Packard Children's Hospital in California.<sup>33</sup> The study, conducted among children, looked at the experience of a meal consisting of a burger, fries, chicken, carrots, and milk. Two identical meals were served: one marked with the logotype of McDonald's, the other unmarked. The burger, fries, and chicken were from McDonald's; the carrots and milk were from a local grocer's store. A great majority of the children preferred the meal marked McDonald's. This indicates that children are aware of brands and are influenced by them.<sup>34</sup>

Children are also often exposed to taste-rich experiences when they eat candy. The trend among candy producers is toward the extreme: it must be tastier and sourer, and it must tickle and tingle more in the mouth. Children are exposed daily to impressions in different media, and a taste experience can be a memorable and strong way of grabbing their senses. Nevertheless, consideration must be given to whether the product is eaten regularly or seldom, as it can be more difficult to use extreme tastes in the long term.<sup>35</sup>

## **Flavor the brand**

Firms can apply tastes to flavor a brand and give it more dimensions. It is important for marketers and firms to have a holistic view of a brand, to put different sense expressions together, and sometimes to give up old values and ways of thinking to strengthen the sensory experience.

A firm has to think outside the box and act broadly and variously to please its customers with tastes.



A taste experience is  
a way to flavor the  
brand



There are many examples of firms that have incorporated tastes into their concepts to strengthen their brands. Bookstores sell coffee, clothing stores sell food and beverages, and petroleum companies sell candies. The following example, from the Swedish home interior retail chain IKEA, shows how a firm that does not naturally have any taste items among its products can please the taste sense.

### Accessible Tastes

The restaurants in IKEA's warehouses are located in such a way that they are impossible to avoid. This accessibility, combined with relatively low prices, attracts customers to eat and drink in IKEA. It is also possible to buy hot dogs and fast food close to the checkouts – of course at low prices – which symbolizes the company's concept of low price, simplicity, and accessibility. Taking a break from shopping to eat and drink can lead customers to stay longer and buy more.

Stimulating the individual's taste sense appears to be increasingly important for a firm to create a holistic view of a brand in which the taste sense as well as the other senses plays a role in the sensory experience. A taste experience persuades customers to stay longer in a store, which leads to a higher consumption.<sup>36</sup> Creating a taste experience can be meaningful even if a firm's core product has no natural association with the taste sense.<sup>37</sup>

It is reported that the introduction of tastes into stores and supermarkets started in Europe. Retailers opened cafés where visitors could have a cup of coffee. For instance, Emporio Armani, part of the Italian brand Giorgio Armani, opened cafés in its stores at the end of the 1980s. Donna Karan, Macy's, and Bloomingdale's are other companies that have included food and beverages in their store concepts. In this way a lifestyle can be created around a brand where customers get something else beyond the shopping experience.

Firms that naturally appeal to the taste sense with their products have good opportunities to flavor the brand by introducing new tastes. Previously we mentioned Cloetta Fazer as an example. However, two probably more distinguished examples are the carbonated mineral water brands Loka of the Swedish brewery Spendrups and Ramlösa of the Danish brewery Carlsberg. They offer sparkling water in several flavors. The most popular are citrus and lime, but lingonberry, grape, orange, and melon are also popular.<sup>38</sup>

Since 1986 the consumption of bottled water in Sweden has more than doubled, from 8 liters to 20 liters per person per year. Interest in flavored sparkling water has also increased, especially during the past decade. About half of the 160 million liters of sparkling water that was sold in Sweden in 2006 was flavored.<sup>39</sup>

To a large extent it is customer demand that determines what flavors of sparkling water we can find on the market. Women buy more sparkling water than men, and it is mainly the younger generation who seek new flavors. Drinking sparkling water is a lifestyle for many people today, and it is possible to choose from many taste options.

### Think beyond the tip of the tongue

It is clear that a firm has to consider how to stimulate the individual's taste sense as much as possible, even if its product has no natural association with taste. This is more complex in some trades than others, for example when the consumer has full control of the product after purchase.

In the car industry many producers make it possible to eat and drink inside the car. There are places to put beverages and other spaces for food. But how does this benefit the car producers? As many people eat and drink inside the car, not least because of fast-food drive-ins, it is important to satisfy the customer's needs. Although it is not the car producers that are applying tastes as a marketing tool, a taste experience is produced inside the car, which can create good feelings around the car experience.

The Swedish auto brand Saab, part of General Motors,



It is possible to get a taste experience in many other places than just at the kitchen table



has received favorable publicity for its dashboard cup-holder. This is an example of design for a taste experience inside a car.

There are more reasons to design for the end-user, and a firm that does not yet apply tastes in sensory marketing can start doing so in the future. It is about being a step ahead. In the future, the firm might appeal to the taste sense, and it can be favorably prepared to do so by already having products that can be used in a taste context.

We can see that it is complicated for many firms to appeal to the taste sense, but why not be more open-minded about tastes in sensory marketing? This might get us past the big limitations, perhaps mainly imagined, that restrict appeals to the taste sense in marketing practice. A firm, regardless of its trade, should take advantage of the fact that people like their taste buds to be stimulated. This can be achieved by such simple methods as giving customers standing in a queue something to eat and drink, because this makes the waiting time seem shorter.

Firms whose core products do not appeal to the sense of taste still have good opportunities to promote themselves using tastes. This is clear among the petroleum companies. Although the core product is gas, other products, such as newspapers, fast food, and beverages, have received more marketing focus in advertisements, radio and TV commercials, and billboards.

The Norwegian petroleum company Statoil has incorporated taste into its concept to strengthen and broaden the brand.

### **Fuel for People**

With 600 stations in Sweden, Statoil is one of the biggest petroleum companies in the country. Most of the stations are staffed until midnight, and some are open 24/7. By offering a broad selection of goods and services, not just for the car but also for people, the company's goal is to make the customer's everyday life better. In addition to gas, diesel, and biogas, Statoil is offering hot dogs, coffee, and food. It has almost 200 concept stations which have an extended selection of sandwiches, salads, and beverages. "Take the chance to eat something when you are filling the tank or washing the car" is the message on Statoil's Swedish website.



Even though tastes do not belong to the core product, they work as an experience trigger and seem to be an important differentiator for the petroleum companies. It is important to act from a broader perspective – outside the actual product frame – and to focus on the individual’s entire experience, as Statoil and other petroleum companies do.

Firms can also stimulate the taste sense in tactical marketing campaigns to get the customer’s attention. At new product launches, it is common to use food and beverages to improve interaction with the customer and get a better chance to convey the message.

After that, it comes down to tactical marketing. However, the most important thing is to stimulate the taste sense strategically from a long-term perspective. The ambition should be that customers associate a taste experience with a particular brand. The hotel chain Doubletree in the United States is trying to do this by giving guests a cookie when they check in.

“ It should be possible to “taste” a brand to create a supreme sensory experience ”

Offering something to eat and drink, preferably regularly, makes it possible for the customer to “taste” the brand, not just the food or drink. This kind of argument can be seen as utopian, but it should not be neglected by firms in the binary society.

**THE BRAND AS TASTE EXPERIENCE**

There is huge potential to use a service landscape as a place for taste experiences. However, it is not common to apply tastes in, for example, stores or supermarkets as a way to create brand awareness and establish a sustainable brand image.

Moreover, as customers become more critical and selective about what they eat and drink, firms that apply tastes must be more professional about product quality and customer treatment. It is not enough to be second best; customers are as sensitive as their taste buds!

The British retail chain Hotel Chocolat is an example of how a successful taste experience can be accomplished through different sense expressions.<sup>40</sup>

### Hotel Chocolat – A Sensorial Taste Strategy

Hotel Chocolat is not a hotel, a restaurant, or a regular store. Rather, it is a home for chocolate lovers. The company wants to reduce the gap between the cocoa plantations and chocolate lovers by offering exclusive and high-quality chocolate and finely flavored cocoa. The concept is successful: in 2008 Hotel Chocolat was awarded the title “The emerging chain of the year,” and in 2007 it was officially confirmed to be a Cool Brand.

One key to its success is the atmosphere in the service landscape, where sense expressions such as *interplay*, *symbiosis*, and *synergy* create an amazing sensory experience, not least because of the cocoa colors of the interior and the carefully shaped details inspired by fashionable restaurants.

The company’s *name* as a sense expression – Hotel Chocolat – highlights the passion for chocolate. Moreover, *presentation* as a sense expression is of great importance for both the service landscape and the packaging of the chocolate. Many customers buy the chocolate just because of the beautifully designed packages, which they use as knick-knacks at home. Thus, the visual expressions contribute to brand awareness and customer experience of the company. The staff, who wear trendy clothes, let customers taste chocolates from the selection to enhance the taste experience in the service landscape. All this together facilitates a *setting* as a sense expression that breathes chocolate.

Sense expressions such as *knowledge*, *delight*, and *lifestyle* are characteristics of the Hotel Chocolat Tasting Club, which has more than 100,000 members across Europe. Every month members get the delight of chocolate “made with premium wholesome ingredients, passion and flair.” Members are invited to rate the chocolate, and the results are presented in the members’ magazine. The knowledge is used by Hotel Chocolat to develop new products.

There is no doubt that Hotel Chocolat has succeeded in reducing the gap between the cocoa plantations and chocolate lovers: they actually have their own cocoa plantation!

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## THE TOUCH SENSE

*The touch sense can amplify experiences when the other senses cannot be fully used*

This chapter discusses the importance of physical and psychological interaction between firms and individuals. Sense expressions that focus on a touch experience are described in detail. We also discuss the importance of accessibility and digital technology to interaction with a brand. Finally, the Volvo brand of the U.S. carmaker Ford is presented as an example of the brand as a touch experience.

### TACTILE MARKETING

#### The three-dimensional sense

One of the most important observations from our research is the increasing centrality of physical and physiological interaction to the individual's experience of a brand. This can be all about how a commodity is packaged, how a dentist handles the drill, or how the control panel of an iPod is designed. This kind of interaction has often been overlooked by firms and seen as unimportant for the individual's sensory experience of a brand. In the binary society the touch sense should instead be seen as an opportunity for firms and brands to engage an individual's heart and mind through different forms of interaction.

We claim that a firm's tactile marketing, where "tactile" describes the transmission of

information or feelings when products and brands are touched either physically or virtually, is entirely based on interaction. This builds



**It is time to pay serious attention to tactile marketing**



upon the touch perceptions and touch experiences of an individual to increase the physical and psychological interaction between a firm and that individual. In this regard, tactile marketing can be seen as a way to express the identity and values of a brand.

Tactile marketing deepens and clarifies the interaction between a firm and its customers on a personal level. To show the importance of targeting the touch sense in sensory marketing we present an example from IKEA Furuset in Norway. The company offered its customers an overnight stay in the department store to allow them a longer touch experience of its beds.

### A Brand's Dream

IKEA in Norway argues that the department store is one of the most popular tourist attractions in the country. During the summer of 2007 the company let its customers stay the night. The aim was to create a touch experience of IKEA, at the same time as the actual features of the bed were surely experienced after a night's sleep. The night's stay was free, and customers could choose between a basic dormitory, a family room, and a marriage chamber. However, customers had to expect to be woken by other customers when the department store opened as usual at 10 a.m. the following morning. In return, free breakfast was served, and customers could take the bedclothes and a feeling of IKEA home.

The IKEA concept relies on customers participating in tactile marketing by enabling them to touch the products. Not only in the department store but also when customers assemble the furniture at home, they interact with the products. Here the touch sense, the capacity to perceive three-dimensional objects, becomes very useful. Before the furniture has been tested, delivered, and assembled, physical interaction is a constant part of the experience that the company's products should produce.



The touch sense can be called our three-dimensional sense



In the case of furniture, it is not enough for products to be attractive if information about the functional and physical experience of those products is limited. Clearly, firms, by creating a touch experience, have

great potential to differentiate and express their identities and values more clearly and distinctly, because customers often interact physically with a product during the purchase and consumption processes.

Interaction can emerge through the touch sense, which begins with the skin. Through the skin we perceive physical contact with our surroundings and explore objects around us.<sup>1</sup> The tactile sense strengthens experiences when the other senses cannot be fully used – for example, in the dark or in other situations where the eyes cannot provide enough information. Thus the touch sense augments the visual sense and is essential for the perception of deep contours and three-dimensional objects.

The touch sense also allows people to establish a “sense of form,” which tells us whether a knife is sharp, a stone hard, or a ball round without the need to touch them. In this way people can remember and re-experience a feeling of touch just by seeing or thinking about an object. Firms can use tactile marketing to contribute to special touch impressions that form the foundation of the brand image established by customers’ sensory experiences.

Therefore, the touch sense is important for how customers perceive a product and its quality. This is demonstrated by cars, clothes, food, and electronics, where the choice among brands often depends on how the products feel physically. Moreover, a touch experience can add positively to the perception of a product in situations where product-related information about price or features, say, is missing.<sup>2</sup> The touch experience plays a role in the consumption of services as well as commodities. Whether it involves the purchase of a new vacuum cleaner or a long taxi trip, the touch experience that products add to the individual’s sensory experience is critical.

This can be compared to a handshake, where our first impressions of the other person are often important in establishing a sense of reliability and trust. Firms need to seize opportunities to touch their customers. Opportunities can arise when the customer touches an article of clothing or the door of a car or opens a package. Touch impressions register experiences the lay the foundation for the image of a brand.

### **Receptors that touch**

As early as the seventh week, a child reacts to touch. Touch originates when the skin comes into direct contact with an object, but

“touch” is also used to describe perceptions through other sensory impressions, such as sight or sound; such impressions affect both the skin and people’s feelings. The skin can, for instance, become cold and pale in response to unpleasant visual impressions. In this chapter we use “touch” as a description of physical touching.

“ Touching objects can lead to both pleasant and unpleasant experiences in marketing ”

Thus, it is through the body’s largest organ, the skin, that people feel touch. The skin on a fully grown human has a surface area of about two square meters and makes up 10–25 percent of body weight. The characteristics of the touch sense are illustrated in Figure 7.1.

Tactile receptors in the skin register touching. All forms of touching that we feel activate the brain; the skin and its receptors allow us to feel, for example, heat, cold, roughness, smoothness, and pain.

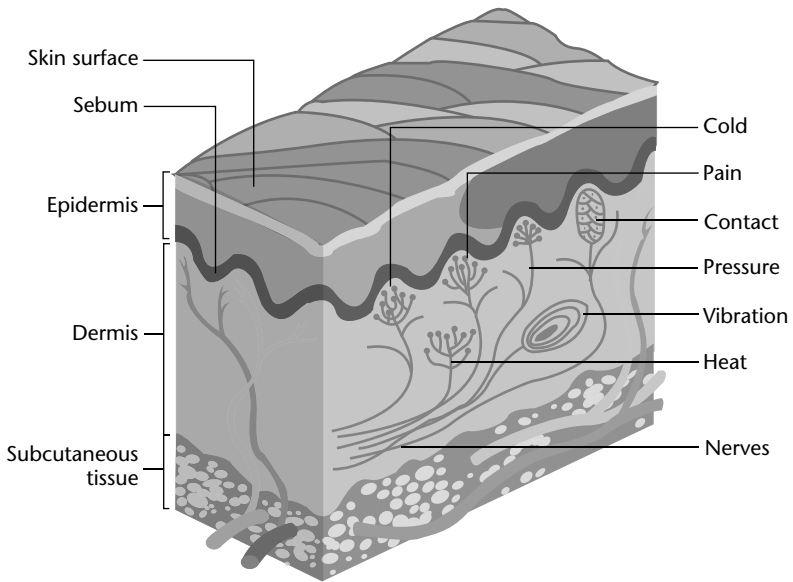


FIGURE 7.1 The characteristics of the touch sense

Source: Bild & Form Jonny Hallberg.



People are especially sensitive around the mouth and on the hands, because the distance between tactile receptors in those areas is less than 1 millimeter, whereas on the back the distance between receptors is 70–90 millimeters.

Receptors send signals to a particular area in the cerebral cortex during touching. The parts of the body that are rich in receptors, such as the hands, take up a lot of space in the brain. The little finger takes up more space in the brain than the whole back, which demonstrates the sensitivity of our hands. Thus, the hands can be seen as the brain's link to the outside world, through which we explore the objects in our surroundings.

During a pleasant touching experience the hormone oxytocin is secreted, which leads to well-being and calmness. Initially scientists believed that only women had the hormone, because it is secreted during childbirth and breastfeeding, but during the 1950s it was proven that men also produce oxytocin.

The following example explains the positive impact of touching.<sup>3</sup>

### **Subconscious Touching Increases Well-Being**

In an experiment conducted at Purdue University, a female librarian was given the task of investigating what students were reading. For half of the experiment, she was told to touch the visitors, as imperceptibly as possible. When a student returned a library book she lightly touched the student's hand, and the student was then asked to fill in a form about his experience at the library that day. The student was asked whether the librarian smiled or touched him when he returned the library book. The student reported that the librarian smiled, even though that was not the case. The student did not report that the librarian touched him. The study appears to show that students who were unconscious of having been touched enjoyed the library, and life in general, more than students who had not been touched.

Similar results have been shown when waitresses touch restaurant guests and receive a larger tip. Touching apparently affects us subconsciously. One reason could be that touching results in lower blood pressure, which is why people become calm and relaxed after repeated touching.

## TEXTURE AS EXPERIENCE TRIGGER

The texture of brands and products influences the individual's touch sense and touch experience. Consciously using texture in sensory marketing can increase the perceived value of a brand for customers.

“ Texture can positively contribute to the touch experience of a brand ”

The composition of a texture can contribute to products or an interior in a service landscape having specific attributes regarding surface or stability, for example. The different kinds of sense expressions that can facilitate a touch experience are illustrated in Figure 7.2.

### Material and surface

*Material* as a sense expression can elucidate a brand's identity and values. This fact can be applied in a service landscape and can involve both commodities and services. The material from which a product is made affects the interaction between a brand and the individual.

Natural materials, such as leather and wood, are commonly perceived as warm and soft, and they can be used to make people feel

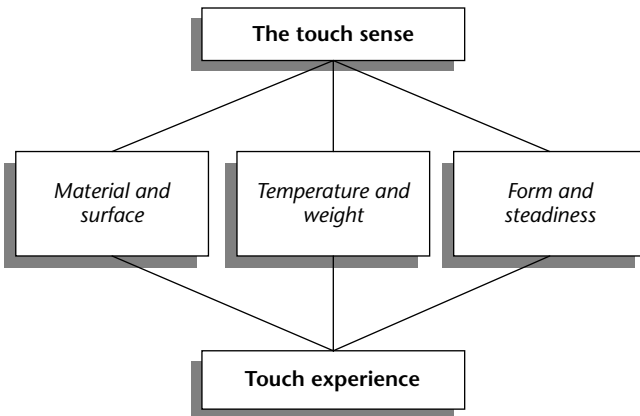


FIGURE 7.2 Sense expressions and the touch experience

Source: B. Hultén, N. Broweus, and M. van Dijk, *Sinnesmarknadsföring* (Malmö: Liber AB, 2008).

relaxed and in harmony with nature. Brick can create a warm feeling because its color is associated with fireplace heating stoves, interior walls, or cozy terraces.<sup>4</sup>



**A material can indicate whether a brand should be perceived as warm or cold**



Unnatural materials, such as glass and metals, are commonly perceived as hard and cold. Such materials are often associated with outdoor environments, but they can be used indoors to create a free feeling of order and symmetry, for example.<sup>5</sup>

Consumers may judge a brand in the same way people tend to pre-judge other people by their appearance. Products made of a material that is perceived as unattractive may be judged badly even though their rational and functional attributes are known.

Packaging material can express the personality of a product. A product's packaging often provides an idea about the product's overall attributes and quality. Plastic materials can convey a feeling of "wear and tear," simplicity, and safety, compared with glass, which symbolizes quality. Thus, exclusive drinks are rarely packaged in plastic.

Touching the *surface* of a product, in order to feel its texture, stability, or temperature, increases the possibilities for describing the experience that touching leads to. One study showed that rough materials are of particular importance in being able to describe an earlier experience.<sup>6</sup> In the United States it is possible to patent the surface of a product. The U.S. company Wholesale Wine & Spirits has patented a touch mark described as "a velvet texture that covers the surface of a wine bottle."<sup>7</sup>

The Swedish company ICA Ahold use different materials in advertising matter to reflect the company's different store profiles. For the Maxi stores, which stand for huge packs and low prices, a rugged material is used in direct mailings because it conveys precisely a feeling of big packs and low prices. In contrast, the Kvantum stores use a finer paper quality to express the stores' more exclusive style.

In the travel industry it is common for customers to print out airline tickets at home when they book on the



**What kind of feeling does printing out an airline ticket at your disk on your own paper offer?**



Internet. What kind of touch experience is engendered by a printed ticket? Perhaps it symbolizes low price, so that customers believe they have made a good deal. We might also ask whether a printed ticket gives an impression of safety and security ahead of the experience of such an advanced service as air travel.

Material also contributes to the atmosphere in service landscapes such as stores or department stores by facilitating the customers' touch experience. The Swedish retail chain Lindex uses textiles and soft furnishings in its stores' interiors. The company believes that clothes should not be shown against an interior perceived as cold and sterile.

The flooring in stores and department stores also affects the touch experience. This was shown in a study that tested experiences of three different stores.<sup>8</sup> Blindfolded participants examined the floor with their hands and feet. The floor's surface was perceived as rougher with the hands than with the feet, probably because the hands have more tactile receptors than the feet. The study provided further evidence that tactile sense expressions such as material, temperature, and steadiness are important for the touch experience. It also showed that an oil-based floor was preferred to both laminate and parquet flooring. Here the touch experience becomes even more significant, because it is difficult to recognize any difference between flooring materials just by looking at them. It can also be mentioned that laminate was the most popular flooring material in Europe at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

### **Temperature and weight**

*Temperature* as a sense expression is registered by the individual's receptors for warmth and cold. Whether a product or service landscape is considered warm or cold is important for the touch experience. For instance, when we go to a café we expect our cup of tea to be warm; otherwise the experience can turn out to be negative. The same logic applies in grocery retailing; a dairy section that is too cold does not create an acceptable atmosphere for customers.

Restaurants and open-air cafés often use infra-red heating to allow diners to sit outdoors during colder seasons. In contrast, the Ice Hotel in Jukkasjärvi, Sweden, uses cold, ice, and snow to create a touch experience for its visitors.

### An Ice-Cold Business Idea

The Ice Hotel in Jukkasjärvi relies to a large extent on the low temperature inside the hotel. The whole hotel is built of ice. The walls, tables, chairs, and even the drinking glasses in the “Icebar” thereby create a touch experience. The guests do not experience the cold as unpleasant; rather, they see it as a necessary part of experiencing the hotel. The temperature in the Ice Hotel is  $-5^{\circ}\text{C}$ , regardless of how cold or warm it is outside. Thus, the temperature in the hotel may be experienced as warm and pleasant when it is colder outside.

Temperature’s importance in tactile marketing can also be illustrated with innovations such as the U.S. company Crown Cork’s self-heating or self-cooling beverage cans.

*Weight* is also an essential sense expression for the individual’s touch experience of a brand or a product. Heavy objects are thought to symbolize quality,<sup>9</sup> whereas light and plastic products are often perceived as cheap and of low quality.

“ Premium brands are often associated with being heavier ”

The Danish electronics manufacturer Bang & Olufsen is famous for its timeless and elegantly designed products. Bang & Olufsen illustrates how a firm can create a unique identity and image for itself by stimulating the individual’s sense of touch. The company’s products, everything from remote controls to sound systems, are relatively heavy and distinctive to express the right feeling of quality and convey solidity and richness of detail.<sup>10</sup>

An example from the Swiss Kuoni Group and its Swedish brand Apollo illustrates how the paper weight of catalogs can make a difference.

### Gram with Heavy Weight

Apollo wanted to strengthen the touch experience of its brand before a purchase. The company carefully selects the paper weight of its catalogs to convey the feeling that should be connected with the travel destination. How a catalog is held and browsed can influence the individual’s

touch experience, and the company produces hundreds of thousands of catalogs every year. Apollo's owner, the Kuoni Group, which presents itself as a more expensive and exclusive travel company, varnishes the paper in its catalogs to create a stronger touch experience and express its distinct identity.

Although most people book travel on the Internet today, it is still essential that printed matter, such as brochures and catalogs, communicates what a brand stands for. Moreover, many people prefer to sit down and browse a brochure or magazine before making next year's travel choice, and all touch points that customers interact with are of importance.

### Form and steadiness

*Form* as a sense expression for products, packaging, or the interior of a service landscape can express a brand's identity, and a unique form can be one way for a firm to differentiate itself from competing brands. The Swiss brand Toblerone, the Swedish brand Brämhults juice, and the U.S. brand Pringles, produced by Proctor & Gamble, are examples of brands that have a unique form as part of their tactile marketing. The shape of these brands is one of their most characteristic features.



The form of a brand can attract customers through touch; it is not enough for it to be nice to look at



Form is critical to attracting customers at an early stage of the purchasing process, not least when many possible choices are available to them. This is the case for bottled water, where water with many flavors and from many different brands competes for the customer's attention on the shelves. A classic example of how the form of a bottle can establish the identity and image of a brand is Coca-Cola, with its characteristic glass bottle. The slightest touch associates the form of the bottle with Coca-Cola. The same is true of the Absolut Vodka bottle, whose form is one of the brand's characteristic features.

It is possible to get a trademark for a product's form.

### The Form of an Apple

Apple has been given a trademark for the three-dimensional form of the iPod. The trademark is unique because trademarks are normally given for two-dimensional forms, such as logos, images, and colors. The trademark is for the “design of a portable and handheld digital electronic media device comprised of a rectangular casing displaying circular and rectangular shapes therein arranged in an aesthetically pleasing manner.”<sup>11</sup>

Firms typically pay too little attention to the potential value of trademarks when it comes to non-traditional intellectual property. Recognizing this potential value can make a significant difference to a firm’s long-term success. Thus, Apple has applied for a similar trademark for its iPhone.

Different forms can attract different target groups. For instance, the Capri Sun drink for children is shaped to make it easy to hold and to use a straw. A broad range of products with different forms can therefore attract a broader customer base.

Products and packaging should have a form that is easy to grip and hold. Packaging should also be ergonomic and functional. An example of the latter is Heinz Tomato Ketchup, whose package makes it easy to get ketchup from the bottle. Wine boxes also illustrate how form can imply functional attributes. In other words, the packaging needs to be developed so that both the functional and emotional requirements of firms and consumers are satisfied.

*Steadiness* – whether something is soft or hard – is a sense expression that firms should include when they strive to achieve a unique touch experience through the brand. It can imply both the *steadiness* of a commodity and *steadiness* in the interior of a service landscape for a retailer or service provider.

McDonald’s restaurants have long been designed to generate fast customer turnover, with hard chairs and tables that do not especially invite a longer stay. But during 2006 the firm decided to make big changes to about half of its 14,000 restaurants in the United States. The project was called “McMakeover,” and the purpose was to enhance the brand’s image and to make the restaurants more inviting.<sup>12</sup> This was achieved through aesthetically inviting forms – combining sight

and touch – and with softer chairs. Wireless Internet and flat-screen TVs will be added so that customers stay longer and enjoy McDonald's.

Such reasoning shows the high requirements and expectations customers have for firms in the binary society in terms of offering delight and sensuality. In restaurants, cafés, and stores people like to enjoy themselves, and in service landscapes companies have a good opportunity to create strong and persistent brands.

The Nordic Light Hotel in Stockholm, Sweden, creates a touch experience for guests through the solidity of its interior features. Bed linen, towels, sheets, and pillows must have the right feel, as expressed by the CEO of the hotel, Anders Johansson:

We have three different pillows per bed: one hard, one medium, and one soft, so that you can choose the one you like. You can also have all three of them, if you prefer.

Because a night in a hotel implies staying in a service landscape for a longer period, it is important that the interior and all the surfaces that customers come into contact with contribute to a positive touch experience. This covers everything from door handles to water taps and furniture.

In the travel business there is no doubt that the touch experience is significant, which is why many firms compete to offer customers the best comfort and convenience. The Swedish bus firm Bus4you provides an example of this. The buses' soft and comfortable folding seats, with support for the arms and legs, look more like easy chairs than traditional – narrow and hard – bus seats. Bus4you alone among the bus firms in Sweden offers its passengers a better touch experience and comfort; the company expresses its identity and differentiates itself by appealing to customers' sense of touch.

The Swedish travel company Apollo and the Scandinavian airline SAS add convenience and comfort through the shape and solidity of the seats in their cabins. Apollo's cabins are constructed to give a longer seat pitch, extending the distance to the next row to increase the comfort of passengers. SAS argues that the longer a trip, the higher the comfort level should be. On longer flights customers



**Design and form together contribute to a sight and touch experience**





are offered more comfortable seats. On the longest flights there are even more comfortable seats, almost like beds, to enhance the touch experience. At the same time, few customers are willing to pay extra for convenience and comfort. This was shown in a study conducted by SAS, where comfort was rated the third most important aspect of travel.

## TO TOUCH A FEELING

### An affecting experience

The touch sense is an intimate sense, and it is most useful when we physically touch an object. However, the touch sense also helps us to perceive three-dimensional objects by only thinking about or seeing them, because they are stored in the brain as an earlier experience.

“ Touching a brand produces in an individual not only physical but also psychological reactions ”

The reactions formed when we touch something are not only physical but also psychological, adding to our feelings and experiences. Touching something thereby gives a deeper meaning, and touching itself, which tells us whether something is hard or soft, smooth or abrasive, can make us relive memories and feelings from a hard bench or a smooth cheek.

The importance of a touch experience for people's feelings was demonstrated in a campaign by a charity organization in which a leaflet with a piece of sandpaper attached illustrated the feeling of touching an underfed child's skin. With the message “Touch This,” the organization looked for a touching response and sympathy to increase donations.<sup>13</sup>

“Is it possible to touch a feeling?” This question was asked in a TV commercial for Panasonic that was broadcast in Sweden during the fall of 2007. The commercial was emotional, with a female voice expressing the following sentiment:

Why are some experiences stronger than others? Is it possible to touch a feeling? How might it be there although it's not? Open your senses. Experience full HD with Viera from Panasonic.

The product marketed in the commercial was the Viera television, with full HD resolution. It was described as a television whose sharp picture and perfect sound make viewers feel like they are so close to the object on the screen that the feelings experienced are almost real enough to touch.

There is no doubt that a touch experience affects our feelings; the answer to Panasonic's TV commercial, based on that reasoning, is "Yes." Of course, this is reasoning without scientific proof, but we believe that firms need to strive to let customers come so close to the feelings that it is almost possible to touch them.

The U.S. company Immersion and SensAble Technologies has developed a technology that makes it practically possible to feel the texture, shape, and weight of three-dimensional objects on a digital screen. It is, for example, possible to shake hands virtually with other people over the Internet. The technology is being used for medical services and in the military. It is still relatively expensive, but when the cost declines, the technology will be useful for many consumer goods.<sup>14</sup>

### Accessibility and interaction

Tactile marketing is based on the fact that brands and products are physically accessible for customers to touch. This enables an interaction between a firm and the individual, and it can also make customers interact with brands they normally would not pay attention to. It also increases the chance of impulse buying and unplanned purchases.<sup>15</sup>

The touch experience is individual, and therefore involves different needs in terms of touching brands and products to create a certain perception about them.<sup>16</sup> It can involve the opportunity to evaluate a brand's logic and rationality as well as its emotions and values. For those people who think of touching as mainly an emotional experience, there is a magnetic need to explore objects by touching them.<sup>17</sup> This is because some individuals are more open to emotional touching than others.<sup>18</sup>



**It is essential for a brand to let customers touch and explore it**



Making brands accessible and thereby enabling interaction has been shown to enhance the emotional response and is vital in purchasing

processes to create a strong feeling for a brand.<sup>19</sup> The service landscape is therefore critical to the individual's opportunities to experience brands and products as part of a firm's sensorial touch strategy.

Even a two-dimensional environment, such as a web page or a brochure, can appeal to the touch sense. This appeal can be through pictures or descriptions of something that, say, "feels soft and smooth against the skin." In this way customers can get a sense of how a product feels physically, even if physical interaction is lacking at that precise moment, because people can remember the feeling of earlier touch experiences.

The deliberate expression of product attributes in a two-dimensional environment can decrease the need for customers to touch those products.<sup>20</sup> The Internet and mail-order catalogs offer possibilities to enhance the touch experience, even though mainly visual impressions are used.

The Swedish Internet-based clothing store Zoovillage provides an example of how a company can sell products that customers normally want to feel and try on before buying. Through pictures, text, and measurement indications to compare at home, Zoovillage visitors can get a perception of how the clothes feel and fit.

In contrast, insufficient visual information increases the need to touch a product. To increase interaction with the individual, a firm might consciously avoid providing detailed and descriptive information on its signs or digital screens. If customers can touch the product and thereby get a stronger feeling, a greater willingness to make a purchase can result.<sup>21</sup>

In today's digitized and globalized world, where e-commerce represents a threat to physical stores, it becomes more important for a brand to be accessible to enable a physical interaction with customers. Camilla Wernlund, Retail Concept Manager at the Swedish fashion chain Lindex, explains how this is applied in sensory marketing practice:

To be able to touch the garment is very important for individuals in the stores in the fashion business. Here I believe the physical stores have their foremost competitive weapon if you look to e-commerce. "See it, feel it, try it, buy it." ... Touch is very important.



**Emotion for a brand is deeper when touch is important for interaction with the customer**



In e-commerce, the inability to touch and try brands and products is a disadvantage,<sup>22</sup> and placing products accessibly has been shown to be essential in physical stores.<sup>23</sup> The U.S. retail brand Abercrombie & Fitch places clothes on low tables, which allows customers a visual overview and contributes to improved accessibility.

Accessibility and interaction with customers are often expressed in so-called concept stores, where almost the entire product range is accessible and can be tried. We can illustrate this with the example of Apple's concept store on Regent Street in London.

### **A Meeting between the Brand and the Individual**

Over two floors, customers can touch Apple's products. Everything from the most powerful computers to the smallest mp3 players is accessible, and many customers visit the store just to read their emails or listen to music. There is a lecture studio with sixty-four seats where Mac users can sit with their laptops and learn more about the hardware and software.

The fourteen-meter-long Genius Bar enables customers to sit down in peace and quiet and speak with the smartest Mac crew in London. They give advice, solve problems, and provide technical support. The interaction between Apple and the individual is maximized, and there is no doubt that the concept store elucidates the brand's identity and values.

The Japanese brand Sony, the Swedish/Japanese brand Sony Ericsson, and the U.S. brand Nike also use concept stores to increase physical interaction with their customers. In Sony's "Style Stores" each area of the interior is designed to invite customers to touch. Moreover, the tactile marketing gives customers the opportunity to try all the products.<sup>24</sup>

**“ More firms are realizing the importance of having customers touch and feel the brand ”**

This was also the purpose of the German brand Nivea's theme "Nivea Touches New York" in 2006. People on the streets of New York learned more about the importance of touch in daily life through, for instance, a "Touch Temple" where free massages for the neck, head, shoulders, and hands were offered. The theme was a unique way to make the firm's products accessible and show their importance for

the skin; at the same time, a natural interaction was effected between Nivea and its customers.<sup>25</sup>

The Swedish company ICA Ahold increases the opportunities for customers to touch, for example, blankets and pillows, because it believes the touch experience is important in the purchasing process for such products. One study shows that touching products is particularly important not only for bed clothes and pillows but also for clothes, shoes, fruit, cars – and toilet paper.<sup>26</sup> The latter example is from the British supermarket chain Asda, where removing the packaging from toilet paper increased sales and expanded selling space in the store.<sup>27</sup>

We claim that tactile marketing is most favorable in the context of premium brands, because here customers are more critical in their purchasing processes.<sup>28</sup> This makes the touch experience for products such as cars, sports equipment, computers, and electronics important, as confirmed in a study showing that the feeling of holding a cell phone is more important than how it looks.<sup>29</sup>

## **Tactile technology**

Tactile technology increases interaction between a firm and the individual. The tactile attributes of brands and products can thereby be emphasized more clearly, which results in user-friendliness for the customers.

In a service landscape this can be expressed through different self-service systems that enable customers to act rationally to save time and money. Typical examples are stores and supermarkets with self-scanning, and railway stations with automatic teller machines for purchasing tickets. In this context, digital technology often involves customers making decisions by pressing their fingers on a touch screen. We believe that Apple has to be considered the most distinguished company in terms of the development of this technology.<sup>30</sup>

But digital screens do not confirm touching to the same extent as physical buttons. Traditional buttons move down slowly with resistance when they are pressed. This is possible to replicate with “GRAB” technology, which stretches the skin to stimulate the touch sense and increase the reality feeling of touching a digital screen.<sup>31</sup>

The touch screens of the iPhone and the iPod touch improve interaction with the customer’s hands. The products use a technology that makes them sensitive to movement. This technology enables different

functions and features when they are held diagonally or horizontally, further demonstrating that touch and the hands are important elements of the touch experience. At

the same time, digital technology also brings rational attributes such as navigation of the product's interface.

Digital technology that stimulates customers' sense of touch is expected to grow in importance. This is in a period with an endless supply of cell phones, mp3 players, digital cameras, and computers that people come into contact with several times every day. One common example is the cell phone that vibrates during an incoming call or text message. The technology that enables this is called "haptic"; it generates a touch experience through pressure and vibration.

Haptic technology enhances efficiency and precision, and it creates a subjective feeling of reality. This increasing realism can lead to engagement and a feeling of presence for users. Haptic technology has been used in devices for decades, in everything from airplanes, where the technology alerts the pilot through vibrations and shaking, to gaming consoles, where the player gets a more immediate reality feeling.

Haptic technology is very common in cars. The BMW navigation system iDrive, which gives the driver full control over a number of functions through a regulator, is built on haptic technology and increases the interaction between the driver and the car. It has safety benefits, because the driver can concentrate on one regulator instead of several.

Haptic technology is also use in cars to create a surface that reminds one of soft and hard leather and provides a more pleasant experience when one touches arm rests, door detailing, instrument panels, and other parts of the interior design. BMW, Audi, and Mercedes-Benz all use this technology, which is one-third or one-fourth the cost of real leather.<sup>32</sup>



**Digital technology  
might be of help in  
facilitating a positive  
emotional experience**



## THE BRAND AS TOUCH EXPERIENCE

It has been a long time since the only use of a car was to get from point A to point B. Now carmakers strive to make the car a place for sensory experiences. This requires increased comfort through different tactile

sense expressions to create an individual's touch experience. We illustrate this point with the example of Volvo's concept car the XC60, which has been developed to provide touch experiences customers cannot avoid.<sup>33</sup>

### The Volvo XC60 Concept – A Sensorial Touch Strategy

Personality, activeness, and sensuality are key words for the Volvo XC60 concept, which aims to provide the increased individualization that customers are seeking. How this can be achieved through tactile marketing is expressed by Volvo's Scandinavian design, which allows better interaction between the driver and the car. The design is clean and stylish in terms of shape, material, and surface; everything connects to offer a unique touch experience.

The touch experience is generated through sense expressions such as *material* and *surface*. The interior material of the XC60 is carefully selected to convey a feeling of premium quality to express Volvo's identity and values. To relate the car to the Scandinavian tradition, white interior surfaces suggest a clean, distinct feeling of snow. This creates both a visual and tactile experience of quality and safety.

In the future, climate issues will become more prominent in the car industry. So Volvo emphasizes *weight* as a sense expression by producing a car that weighs less and thereby consumes less fuel. The XC60 is built from a light and environmentally friendly material that does not give off any substances that are harmful for people with allergies.

The car is designed to have a Scandinavian feel inside that brings out and clarifies shapes, contours, details, and other features of the car. This creates an interplay between material, *form*, and light that increases the experience of touching the interior, regulators, and instruments. The *steadiness* in the armrests and the ergonomic design of the soft seats in leather and textiles contribute further to the expression of the car's identity.

The XC60 has an apparent relationship to nature and digital technology. This can be seen on the inside of the doors, which combine a soft and naturally dense material with hard technological functions. The integration of nature and technology is an important part of the touch experience in the Volvo XC60 concept.

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## THE BRAND AS SENSORY EXPERIENCE

This concluding chapter summarizes our ideas and thoughts about sensory marketing. Concepts such as the brand soul, sensors, sensations, and sense expressions are discussed within a sensory marketing framework. At the end of the chapter, best practice with regard to the supreme sensory experience is illustrated using the example of the U.S. grocery retailer Whole Foods.

### EMPATHY AND DELIGHT

#### The symbiosis of the brand

At the start of this book, we raised the following question: “Why do firms focus on the human senses in marketing at the beginning of the twenty-first century?” Our research shows that one of the main reasons for the growing interest in the five human senses is an ambition among firms to try to offer a customer treatment – not customer acquisition or customer retention – that is more individualized and more personalized than before. The challenge is to find alternative approaches to penetrating the brand noise and the brand crowd that exist in nearly all global consumer markets in the binary society.<sup>1</sup>

Many firms are trying new ways to get into the human brain at a deeper level using sensorial strategies and sense expressions to create the supreme sensory experience of a firm. To succeed in the global marketplace it is no longer enough to produce and deliver colorful and informative advertisements or TV commercials on mass-marketing principles. Nor is it sufficient



It's up to the firm to achieve symbiosis between the brand and the individual



to produce and deliver digitized, personal direct-marketing messages with bonus coupons on relationship marketing principles to reward customers who show loyalty to the brand.

Sensory marketing is about creating and facilitating customer treatment based on a symbiosis between the brand and the individual, especially with respect to a firm's identity and values relating to issues such as child labor, the economy, health, the environment, and social responsibility. In this regard the ability of a brand to develop and demonstrate empathy seems crucial within a sensory marketing framework.

Here "empathy" is defined as a firm's ability to be aware of and understand an individual's emotions and feelings. In sensory marketing practice it involves making judgments on that basis. It can also be defined as the ability to feel and think just as the individual does. For a firm, empathy concerns not only emotions and feelings but also intellectual capacity. Thus, empathy also has a rational aspect in terms of being able to judge an individual and the current situation. One important part of empathetic capability is, therefore, an ability to distinguish between one's own feelings and others' and between the present and the past.

Is it possible for a firm to demonstrate empathetic capability? Our answer to that question is yes, and in sensory marketing this is one of the key thoughts that enable firms to enter and reach the human brain through the five senses at a deeper level.

A firm has to attract people's hearts as well as their minds through both the left and right sides of the brain to create a supreme sensory experience. For example, in fall 2007 the French carmaker Peugeot communicated an offer to its customers via an advertisement addressing both sides of the brain. The left side was addressed through statements of product benefits and features such as "Peugeot Diesel Premium 10,000 kronor," "Webasto Diesel Heater with watch 0 kronor," and "Particle filter 6,000 kronor with tax discount and comfort package only 4,900 kronor," and the right side through expressions of emotions and delight such as "Test drive at your nearest Peugeot dealer."

Another example of empathetic capability comes from the Swedish fashion retailer Gina Tricot, where the concept "fast fashion" is key. When the trade magazine *Habit* made Gina Tricot the Fashion Chain of the Year in Sweden 2007, among the citations of the jury was "a good flair for [judging] the wants of the target group." The company

offers its customers, who are mainly young women aged eighteen to twenty-five, continuous new products at low prices – blouses, skirts, and T-shirts – matching the individual's demand for change.



**Empathy is as much  
about emotions as  
about rationality**



Individualization as lifestyle is simply the result of the individual's ambition to search constantly for a new look for identity creation and image building. Gina Tricot has, since 1997, satisfied its customers with fast fashion, resulting in the rapid expansion and organic growth of the chain in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark during the past twelve years.

Gina Tricot shows how a brand's empathetic capability can be clarified through emotional as well as rational features. In the binary society it is a matter of course for individuals to develop their own personality and style. And it is important for a brand to contribute to this by demonstrating empathy. This can lead to a deeper satisfaction of personal needs, where emotions and rationality are emphasized in a sensory marketing framework.

Digital technology is an example of the simplification of empathy and can be seen as a vital driving force behind ongoing individualization. The human brain is more than ever the focus of digital technology in daily life and work life. Each individual who uses the technology is able to create participation, influence, and freedom of choice on his or her own terms. Digital technology makes it possible for people to distinguish between present and past as well as their own emotions and feelings to discover the changes the human senses seek.

The website of a brand can offer an individual both rational and emotional features. The rational features might be that the website is accessible 24/7, is easy and fast to access, offers factual information, and allows immediate purchases. The emotional features might be the identity and values the brand mediates – for example, the choice of when a payment should be made via an Internet bank, of what kind of subscription you want for a cell phone, or of your next travel destination.

The Internet makes it possible to discover changes in real time, and the individual's senses can constantly satisfy the need to search for new opportunities. In fact, no longer is anything getting old, because novelties are emerging all the time.

## The forgotten senses

A second main reason for the growing interest in the five human senses is to be found in the overlooking of the human senses in traditional mass- and relationship marketing theories.<sup>2</sup> It is evident from our research that marketing theory has neglected the significance of the five human senses for an individual's experience of a brand. Sensory marketing requires an understanding of the processes that cause or affect our sensory perceptions and apperception in various purchase and consumption processes.

When a sense impression is sensitized in an individual, this is what might be perceived. These sense impressions are often the basis for the symbiosis an individual develops with a particular brand.



**Marketers must begin to understand how a brand is interpreted in the human brain**



Knowledge about individual perception is extremely interesting for marketers, especially when it concerns how a symbiosis with a brand can take place and become personified in the human brain. Here, concepts such as *sensorial* and *sensuality* can increase insight.

Researcher Sidney Levy claims that the consumption of ideas, products, or brands involves all five human senses and that a human's sensorium is conducive to the creation of fondness and priority for certain things.<sup>3</sup> This enables an individual to discover new possibilities that can lead to a different level of satisfaction being reached. Levy further claims:

Also, tastes, textures, smells, sights, and sounds are so richly and subtly interwoven in our experiences to form such complex gestalts that taking hold of them in a fully relevant manner is a major research challenge.<sup>4</sup>

Through the sense organs arise processes that are called "sensorial," from the term "sensorium." The term is used in connection with marketing, product development, and goods inspection. Sensory analysis is a scientific discipline that measures, interprets, and analyzes the product quality, for example, of packaging, cosmetics, and food.

Sensory analysis primarily concerns how we perceive a product's physical attributes and how the product is perceived through the

smell, sound, sight, taste, or touch sense. It is common to conduct sensory analysis through consumer tests where the degree of liking can be established or through laboratory tests where differences are measured. Moreover, sensory analysis is based on quantitative as well as qualitative scientific approaches.<sup>5</sup>

Analysis can be performed with respect to any sense in terms of how a brand is perceived by an individual. We suggest that sensory analysis should include all those sense expressions, beyond physical attributes, that represent a brand in terms of the five human senses. It should be possible to include goods as well as services and service landscapes in the analysis.

“ Why shouldn't customers enjoy the brands they spend money on? ”

Epistemology assumes that all human knowledge derives from the sense functions of the human brain, which is what the concept of “sensuality” refers to. It is common in ethics to define sensuality as the highest value of human life in terms of sensory enjoyment. In aesthetics sensuality refers to a work of music, literature, or art, for example, that can create a strong sensual response. This might also be described as a sexual response, which is often what is meant by describing something as sensual.

It is obvious that clear parallels can be drawn with products or brands, so the question of whether marketing in general has so far been sensual is easy to answer. We claim that mass and relationship marketing theories have some sensual features or elements, expressed mainly in advertising. But because the human senses have been forgotten in mass and micro marketing, they are by tradition neither sensorial nor sensual. It is against this background that the growing interest in sensory marketing must be understood. It takes its point of departure from the human senses, sensorial strategies, and sensuality. These concepts can contribute to increased understanding of how a sensory marketing framework is different from mass and relationship-marketing frameworks.

Firms should have a sensory manual to develop successful sensorial strategies as a complement to their marketing plan, mainly to create brand awareness and establish an image of the brand that refers to sensorial strategies and sensuality. We believe that firms should have a well-thought-out analysis and strategy for the sense expressions that should contribute to this plan. Sense expressions for each of

the five human senses have been discussed in the previous chapters; in this regard a sensory manual might correspond to a work plan for each sense individually or for all the senses together in creating the supreme sensory experience.

One of the key concepts of sensory marketing is developing the personal touch in a sensory experience.<sup>6</sup> We believe that this touch should be related to every sense and comprise the supreme sensory experience. In art, “touch” often refers to how an artist personally expresses colors through, say, light, fast, or anonymous brush strokes. In the same way, a firm can use different sensorial strategies to stamp its personal character onto brands and products through different sense expressions.

“ Sensory marketing is about giving the brand a personal touch ”

In a sensory marketing framework each sense expression of a firm should lend a personal touch to a brand. In earlier chapters we have shown how this can be achieved in marketing practice using the senses as experience triggers. Sensorial strategies for each sense or all the senses together can contribute to a symbiosis of the brand where the personal touch is the most significant feature of the supreme sensory experience.

## SENSORS, SENSATIONS, AND SENSE EXPRESSIONS

### Sensory marketing as concept

How should a firm apply sensory marketing? As can be seen from the previous discussion, sensory marketing should begin in strategic marketing, where the firm’s identity and values are clarified through different sense expressions. It mediates a picture of a firm and a brand that can create brand awareness and establish a positive brand image among customers.

Our research shows that many firms are choosing to concentrate on the five human senses in a more deliberate way than before. Visual expressions such as design, packaging, and theme remain the most common expressions in mass and relationship marketing, but it is no longer sufficient to use visual or sight expressions alone to attract the human senses. Instead, a holistic view that emphasizes the supreme sensory experience should be at the center of a firm’s sensory marketing.

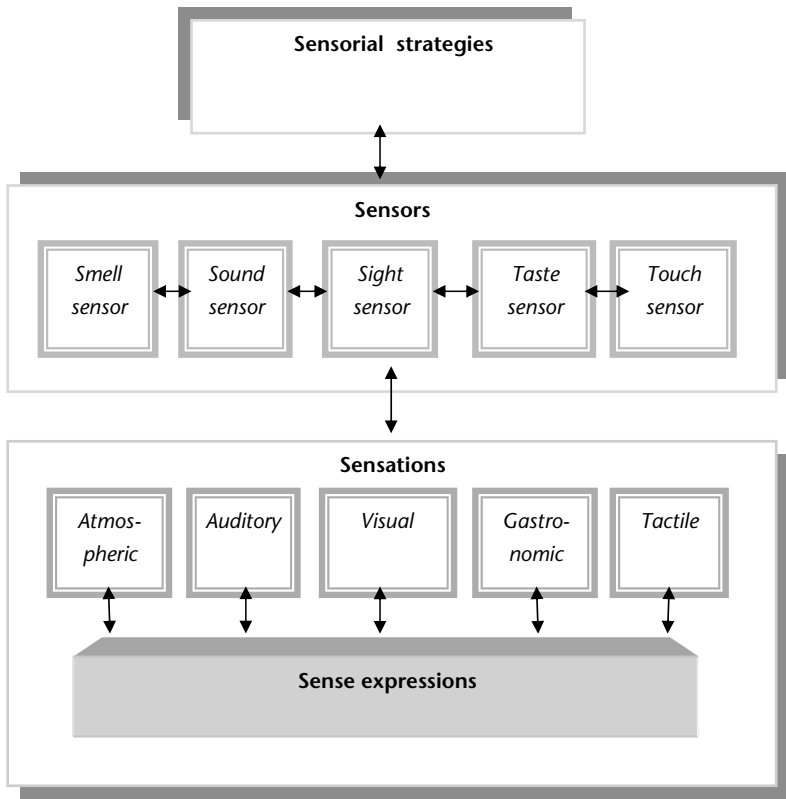


FIGURE 8.1 A sensory marketing framework

Source: B. Hultén, N. Broweus, and M. van Dijk, *Sinnesmarknadsföring* (Malmö: Liber AB, 2008).

The sensorial strategies that provide the foundation of customer treatment rely on three concepts: sensors, sensations, and sense expressions. These concepts are the basis for the sensory marketing approach a firm develops and applies, and they contribute to developing sensorial strategies for the supreme sensory experience (Figure 8.1).

The concept of *sensors* expresses how a firm can use different devices or digital equipment to which the human senses respond to transmit triggers, or stimuli, to customers or to receive signals, or information, about customers' purchasing behavior. Sensors can be used in an office, shop,

“ Offering sensations is a prerequisite of sensory marketing ”



or supermarket in the down-to-earth service landscape or on websites in the virtual landscape.

Many leading retail chains are using sensors for communication and information in their sensory marketing practice, including cameras, digital displays, photo cells, SMS messages, television, webcams, and websites. But these sensors are often related to only the sight sense; they are seldom smell, sound, taste, or touch sensors.

The concept of *sensations* captures how a firm can express itself as a brand by transmitting triggers or stimuli deliberately but unconsciously via different sense expressions to the human brain. In psychology the concept is often related to how an individual perceives a signal, emphasizing personal experience of the environment and one's own body.

If no sensations are created in sensory marketing through one or more sense expressions, no individual sensory experience will take place. A sense experience can take place only if a sense expression, or trigger, is strong enough. In early research in psychology, a mathematical correlation was demonstrated between signals and sensations: an increase in the intensity of a particular signal resulted in a small increase in the strength of the sensation.

Applying sensations in sensory marketing allows a firm to refer to something as an unexpected or sensational event. In mass media, many things are sensational, such as when an unknown athlete wins the 100-meter race at the Olympics. In the same way it might be seen as a sensation when the U.S. Wal-Mart or German Media Market opens a store on the Champs-Élysées in Paris that offers lower prices than ever before in Europe. But in a sensory marketing framework the idea is to create sensations that lead to sensory experiences an individual should be able to perceive and react to. If this happens the individual might become attached to a brand at a deeper, inner level.

The concept of *sense expression* relates to how a firm clarifies a brand's identity and values in relation to the human brain. Sense expressions create an individual's mental picture of a brand's emotional and rational features. The concept of sense expression is ambiguous, and it is commonly used in aesthetics and semantics. For this reason the concept is appealing in a sensory marketing framework, with its focus on both the emotional and rational features of a brand in terms of money and time. One consequence for a firm's

TABLE 8.1 Sensors, sensations, and sense expressions

Sensors	Sensations	Sense expressions
Smell sensor	Atmospheric	Product congruence, intensity, and sex Atmosphere, theme, and advertency Scent brand and signature scent
Sound sensor	Auditory	Jingle, voice, and music Atmosphere, theme, and advertency Signature sound and sound brand
Sight sensor	Visual	Design, packaging, and style Color, light, and theme Graphics, exterior, and interior
Taste sensor	Gastronomic	Interplay, symbiosis, and synergies Name, presentation, and setting Knowledge, delight, and lifestyle
Touch sensor	Tactile	Material and surface Temperature and weight Form and stability

Source: B. Hultén, N. Broweus, and M. van Dijk, *Sinnesmarknadsföring* (Malmö: Liber AB, 2008).

sensory marketing is that the sense expressions applied should stand for the characteristics that a brand has and wants to communicate to customers (Table 8.1).

The sensory experience of an individual from different sense expressions of a brand also depends on culture, *Zeitgeist*, and everyday life. In a sensory marketing framework a firm can use different sense expressions over time to create brand awareness and establish a brand image, which suggests that a brand should be able to change and adapt to new circumstances just like a human being.

In a sensory marketing framework, the transition from seeing brands in terms of product attributes and features to sensory experiences emphasizes the significance of sensors, sensations, and sense expressions in relation to the human brain. Sensory marketing for a firm means contributing to an individual's sensory experience through a synthesis of the five human senses in applying sensors, sensations, and sense expressions. It is the foundation for what we call "the supreme sensory experience."

## THE BRAND SOUL AS HEART AND MIND

Sensory marketing strategy assumes that a firm applies sensors, sensations, and sense expressions as a basis for creating the individual's sensory experiences through the five human senses. One of the key concepts here is the *brand soul*, its emotional, sensual, and value-based features.<sup>7</sup> A brand that takes into consideration only product attributes and formal characteristics lacks a soul, whereas a brand that also involves emotions, delight, and values has a soul.

This view suggests a symbiosis between the brand soul and the individual when there is a consensus about both emotional and rational features of the brand. Then the brand soul satisfies the individual at a deeper level, through both the left and right cerebral hemispheres. It is still natural to look upon employees, products, and service landscapes as the most prominent factors in reaching a consensus. Of course, factors from advertising and direct marketing to TV spots and websites can also contribute to dialogue and interactivity, often through digital technology. For an individual all of these features are connected in establishing an image of a brand in terms of the brand soul.



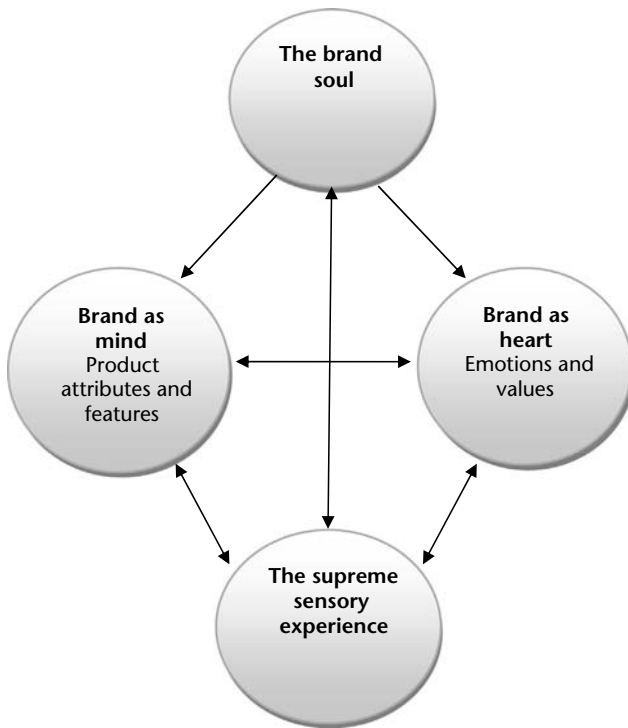
An individual relates himself or herself to a brand's soul in forming a picture of the self



As early as 1923 the U.S. advertising expert Bruce Barton suggested that advertising could help a firm find its soul. Barton meant that advertising should capture the soul of a firm; he gave the example of the carmaker General Motors as a brand that was personal, human, and friendly. This became a metaphor for the American family.<sup>8</sup>

We claim that the concept of the brand soul is twofold and originates in both the identity and values of a firm's brand and the image, or mental picture, of the individual. The essence of the brand soul concept is that it entails both the firm's and the individual's perspectives. This distinguishes the concept from traditional definitions of brands, which often concern only the firm's perspective in terms of brand building.

A brand with a soul must therefore represent the core values of a firm – such as integrity, quality, and self-respect – if it is going to appeal successfully to the individual's emotions, delight, and values as well as logic and rationality. This is a prerequisite in the binary society, where

FIGURE 8.2 **The brand soul**

Source: B. Hultén, N. Broweus, and M. van Dijk, *Sinnesmarknadsföring* (Malmö: Liber AB, 2008).

it is more common for individuals to relate themselves to brands in the same way they do to other humans. One consequence is that it is possible to look upon a firm's brand as consisting of heart and mind, as illustrated in Figure 8.2.

In fact, sensory marketing is more about psychology and sociology than traditional marketing theory with its foundations in the 4 Ps. Traditional marketing theory is based on microeconomics and rational thinking, so mass and relationship marketing usually point out the significance only of product attributes and formal characteristics in forming transactions and building relationships. This is in strong contrast to sensory marketing, where the five human senses are at the center of a symbiosis between the brand and the individual. In this context the brand soul as a concept is an expression of how a firm's

brand, with heart and mind, comprises emotions, delight, and values as well as logic and rationality.

Among brands that are often described as having a soul, Pepsi has been associated with the human's sound sense. It considers music the main expression of an individual's self-esteem. Similarly, Google is considered part of everyday life for many people in helping them find what they are looking for. Its soul has become a helper in the digital world.

“

In contemporary culture a brand must have a soul in offering sensory experiences

”

In the binary society, therefore, a brand with a soul is integrated into our everyday life, and it should be seen as democratic and equalized. As soon as a brand becomes an integral part of the human soul, it is possible to talk about sensory marketing as a way to reach the individual's heart and mind.

We now illustrate the brand as a soul through what we call atmospheric sensations, auditory sensations, visual sensations, gastronomic sensations, and tactile sensations.

### Atmospheric sensations

Our smell sense can remember more than 10,000 scents and is sensitive to every small change in smell, which is why atmospheric sensations through different sense expressions can clarify a brand's soul.

Atmospheric sensations enable a firm to show empathy and sensuality because most people have feelings toward different scents, whether perfumes or natural smells. Scents may be related to specific memories and experiences, so atmospheric sensations can accomplish a symbiosis between a firm and its customers and reinforce the sensory experience. That is the aim of the U.S. lifestyle brand Abercrombie & Fitch when it introduces a smell into the service landscape.

Atmospheric sensations are often expressed through the *intensity* of scents, *product congruency*, and *sex*. In a service landscape the intensity is crucial for the sensory experience when a subtle or distinct scent is perceived by an individual as a way to understand the brand's identity

and character. A brand that wants to emphasize a “soft” or “laid-back” feeling can use a subtle scent, and a distinct scent can be used to express a more aggressive style.

A product-congruent scent can create a consensus between a firm and an individual in terms of products as well as brands. With the British shirt-maker Thomas Pink, atmospheric sensations are expressed through product-congruent scents of newly washed clothes. Another example is the U.S. company Jordan’s Furniture, which expresses the brand soul through woody scents to emphasize the similarity between furniture and the environment and thus reinforce the customer’s sensory experience.

Scents have gender-specific impacts on how an individual perceives atmospheric sensations and on how well a brand succeeds in expressing its soul. For brands that want to convey a masculine or feminine smell as a sensorial strategy, a sense expression as sex is crucial in clarifying the brand soul. The Japanese manufacturer Sony provides an example: in its concept “Style Stores,” sex is applied through scents that are experienced as feminine. The atmospheric sensations aim to reinforce women’s sensory experience of the brand.

Moreover, atmospheric sensations through different scents can contribute to the symbiosis that arises between a brand and an individual. This can help clarify the *atmosphere* in a service landscape, strengthen a *theme*, or create *advertency* for a product. Atmosphere, theme, and attention are of great importance to a holistic view of a brand. Applying such sense expressions in sensory marketing can better clarify the soul of the brand to customers.

An atmospheric sensation as a *signature scent* can strongly reinforce a particular brand soul. The U.S. clothing brand Ruehl uses a signature scent as part of the sensory experience of the brand in reaching a symbiosis between the brand and the individual. The signature scent is also sold as a perfume in the stores; it creates empathy and sensuality in expressing the brand’s soul for those individuals who are attracted to it.

## Auditory sensations

The sound sense is constantly active, and it notices every sound change as an expression for an auditory sensation. Auditory sensations are a

good way to attract attention, as every small change in the tempo, bass, or treble of a sound is noticed by an individual.

Sound can be used in sensorial strategies to demonstrate a brand's empathetic capability and also delight and sensuality. Auditory sensations – no matter whether from a rock concert in a full stadium or a heated election debate on TV – offer insight into other people's thoughts, opinions, and feelings.

Thus, an auditory sensation can express a brand soul when the sensation contributes to an individual's emotional experience. The sensation should try to connect the brand to the individual at a deeper level through sense expressions such as *jingles*, *voice*, and *music*. Microsoft and Intel are companies that use jingles to identify their brands.

The Nordic telecommunications group TeliaSonera provides an example of how to use voices as auditory sensations in creating a sound experience. Its TV commercial shows a dialogue between different people, offering viewers a sensory experience based on their voices. Even Apple uses voices in its television advertising campaign "Get a Mac," which is a dialogue between a laid-back man in casual clothes who introduces himself as a Mac running Mac OS X and a more formal man in a suit and tie who introduces himself as a PC running Microsoft Windows. In this way the voices are connected to our inner thoughts and feelings and help clarify the brand's personality. In particular, the emotional and sensual features can be understood as the brand soul.

But it is more common to apply music as an auditory sensation in creating a sound experience, primarily because music is an important part of many people's everyday life and affects our emotions and feelings. Music enables a brand to express empathy and sensuality and to accomplish a symbiosis with the individual. Sony Ericsson with its Walkman phones and Apple with iTunes are examples of how auditory sensations through music can create a sound experience that connects the brand soul with users. iTunes' "Genius" feature even recommends songs from the iTunes Store on the basis of the individual's taste in music.

In a service landscape music can contribute to an atmosphere that clarifies a brand's identity and character. Furthermore, auditory sensations can reinforce the *theme* of an advertising campaign and draw *attention* to products and brands. Such a calibration of the sound sense should be able to express a brand soul emotionally as well as rationally.

We believe that sound allows a firm to create a holistic sound experience with which an individual can identify. The auditory sensations can together contribute to clarifying a brand's identity and values in the sense that an individual might associate and connect them with a specific brand, a so-called *signature sound*. An example of this is provided by Abercrombie & Fitch, which creates associations and sensory experiences of the brand using a conscious sensorial strategy for the sound sense through its choice of music.

## Visual sensations

The sight sense observes the smallest change in a brand, and visual sensations can offer an individual a holistic sight experience. A firm can apply a number of different sense expressions as visual sensations to clarify a brand soul. Together, these sense expressions often offer an individual a shared identity and a holistic view of a brand.

*Design, packaging, and style* as sense expressions are used to clarify a brand's identity and values concretely and distinctly. These sense expressions make possible a consensus between a brand and an individual that is often grounded in empathy and sensuality. The ultimate expression of this is a brand's genetic code, which illustrates the brand soul.

One example is how the U.S. carmaker Ford's Volvo brand and GM's Saab brand package services for customers who are interested in the latest technological innovations in electronics, the environment, or safety. In this case design is the same as the form and shape of the package – that is, the car. The least little change in the electronic, ergonomic, or technical content of a car is a way of creating visual sensations.

In this regard, it is natural to talk about the meaning of the brand soul in terms of driving a car. In particular, the individual's sensory experience should make it a pleasure to drive the car or to travel as a passenger, whether the car is driven fast or slowly.

*Color and light* as sense expressions for visual sensations are generally considered to help create positive emotions and feelings toward a brand. These expressions are thus strongly connected to a brand soul and are often related to an individual's inner thoughts and experiences. Furthermore, the sense expressions allude to how an individual's personality can be expressed on the surface as well as more profoundly.



There is no doubt that a firm's choice of color, which might appear simple, can reinforce associations with negative or positive experiences. In that case, the choice of color for design, packaging, Internet pages, and advertisements takes on great significance for a brand in terms of how its brand soul is perceived and understood.

Combining color and light to form an expression for the brand soul makes it possible to attract and capture the attention of the individual. For that reason color and light are often mixed to create a positive mood for customers that reinforces the brand image. In a service landscape, it is possible to do this by using color and light sensations to give customers the opportunity to discover changes and differences.

*Theme* as a sense expression involves mediating a message that enables an individual to identify with a brand. Often different themes are involved, from price campaigns to image campaigns for a brand. A theme often mediates a number of reference points, as the individual should be able to associate with and recognize themes to achieve a symbiosis with the brand. This is common in newspaper, TV, and Internet advertising.

*Graphics, exterior, and interior* as sense expressions for visual sensations are significant in creating an external and internal environment that expresses the soul of a brand. It is evident that the shape of any firm's service landscape has a decisive effect on how a brand is identified and experienced. In general, exterior and interior aim to create associations and experiences that clearly and distinctly mediate a brand's identity and values.

### **Gastronomic sensations**

Gastronomic sensations assume that an individual's taste sense is attuned to the smallest change in a brand to contribute to an individual's sensory experience. A number of sense expressions relating to an individual's taste experience can create brand awareness and establish a brand image.

The taste sense is a social sense, around which many encounters and experiences take place among people. For that reason gastronomic sensations can be grounded in empathy and sensuality in offering understanding and equality between an individual and a brand. McDonald's slogan "I'm lovin' it" is intended to mediate positive feelings about hamburgers among bosom friends. Another example is Burger King's

slogan “Have it your way,” which emphasizes individualization as lifestyle.

Sense expressions such as *interplay*, *symbiosis*, and *synergy* are prominent for gastronomic sensations. The contribution of these expressions to a sensory experience is explained by the fact that food and drink are perceived as tastier if the taste and smell senses interact. Thus, the symbiosis and synergy between tastes and smells are the basis for gastronomic sensations.

The interplay, symbiosis, and synergy with the sound, sight, and touch senses is also vital to creating an identity for and holistic view of a brand, especially when the senses together make an individual’s whole sensory experience more positive than one of the senses alone.

*Name*, *presentation*, and *setting* as sense expressions for gastronomic sensations in general are assumed to contribute to positive feelings for products, brands, and service landscapes. In a restaurant – whether it is a Spartan lunch diner or a Michelin-starred restaurant – this can be expressed through features that combine to produce an attractive setting. The German restaurant Dunkel Keller in Berlin and the Iris Black Restaurant in Stockholm, Sweden, are examples of how the brand soul is clarified through a dark environment that reinforces the food and drink experience.

Another example is the shopping centre Central Market in the United States, where gastronomic sensations are expressed by allowing customers to taste and smell all the food and drink. This emphasizes how a service landscape’s environment expresses the brand soul and makes it possible to achieve a symbiosis between the brand and the individual.

Finally, sense expressions such as *knowledge*, *delight*, and *lifestyle* are without a doubt the basis for gastronomic sensations and a brand’s ability to demonstrate empathy and sensuality. Knowledge might be illustrated when food is described as “healthy” or “low-fat” to fit into the lifestyle an individual is looking for and at the same time offers satisfaction and delight in the taste experience.

## **Tactile sensations**

The touch sense feels the smallest change when it comes into contact with an object, and therefore tactile sensations can contribute to clarifying the soul of a brand through sense expressions primarily based on

empathy and sensuality, as when a sweater is comfortable to wear or a soft drink bottle has a curvy shape.

Sense expressions such as *material* and *surface* contribute to tactile sensations that often tell us more about a brand than can be observed with the eyes. For example, a cell phone that feels solid might be higher quality than one that feels simple in its styling; a hand-knitted sweater can offer the feeling of a carefully performed work.

Furthermore, material and surface can tell us more about a brand's soul in relation to ethics, environment, and social responsibility. For example, material can be chosen for its low ecological and environmental impact. In contrast, producing a sweater in poor conditions in a low-cost country can negatively affect the sensory experience.

Tactile sensations mediated through sense expressions such as *temperature* and *weight* are assumed to create positive emotions about a service landscape or product. Just as people want a certain temperature at home or at work, a firm can contribute to the sensory experience by maintaining a certain temperature in the service landscape. This can be accomplished using tactile sensations that help clarify a brand soul. An example in sensory marketing practice is a firm that sells alpine equipment and uses a lower-temperature service landscape to manage how the brand is perceived and understood.

In terms of weight as a sense expression, heavier objects are assumed to be of higher quality and to contribute to positive emotions about a product. The Danish manufacturer Bang & Olufsen incorporates weights into remote controls to reinforce the experience of zapping between TV channels. Similarly, a tactile sensation can clarify a brand soul when heavier papers are used for brochures, leaflets, or other printed materials. Lightness can also be important for tactile sensations, not least for portable products such as laptops. Apple's MacBook Air weighs 3.0 pounds (1.36 kg), and the Dell Latitude E4200 weighs just 2.2 pounds (1.0 kg).

*Form* and *stability* as sense expressions for tactile sensations contribute to increased comfort and convenience in, for example, a service landscape. Such tactile sensations can be created through soft and spacious armchairs in a café or a shampoo bottle that is easy to grip and convenient to use.

Apple is an excellent example of how combining sense expressions can create a symbiosis between a brand and the individual. Through the product's material, surface, form, and weight, tactile sensations are created that combine with visual sensations for brands such as

the iPod touch and MacBook Pro to reinforce the whole sensory experience.

*Accessibility* as a concept is vital in using tactile sensations to clarify and express the soul of a brand. The Swedish retail chain IKEA allows customers to turn, invert, touch, and squeeze all its products, from beds to kitchenware.

## THE SUPREME SENSORY EXPERIENCE

Sensory marketing assumes that a firm should facilitate the creation of a supreme sensory experience for an individual in which the concepts of empathy and symbiosis are critical. When that happens, a brand's soul can be clarified in a firm's sensorial strategies through different sensors, sensations, and sense expressions that together personify a brand.

“

A supreme sensory experience is about smelling, listening, looking, tasting, and touching at the same time

”

As soon as one succeeds in reaching the customer's mind and heart in personifying the soul of a brand, it is a matter of sensory marketing, which is based on offering a personal touch related to emotion, delight, and values as well as logic and rationality. The word “supreme” indicates that a firm should create and deliver a holistic sensory experience that involves all five human senses – the ultimate goal of sensory marketing.

If the human senses are at the centre of a firm's strategic marketing, it is not enough to apply either mass or relationship marketing, whether for goods or services. It is the individual's holistic sensory experience that is crucial.

Using and applying the human senses as the foundation for a sensory marketing framework is a new perspective. It takes as its point of departure the individual and the human brain's ability to understand, perceive, and interpret different sensors, sensations, and sense expressions. As we have shown, this is mainly a result of the increasing individualization that characterizes the culture of the binary society.

“

The soul of a brand is expressed through a personal touch

”

We now present a firm that we consider a model for how a sensory marketing framework can be applied in practice. The U.S. grocery retailer Whole Foods shows how a company's sensory marketing can take as its point of departure the five human senses. Whole Foods has been chosen because grocery retail chains are tuned to all five senses and because they offer both goods and services in creating the supreme sensory experience.

### **Whole Foods – A Supreme Sensory Experience**

#### ***The smell sense as atmospheric sensations***

In the service landscape smells welcome the customers, often with a soft intensity. At the entrance is a bakery from which wafts the product-congruent scent of freshly baked bread. Most food products have no plastic cover, so their natural smells permeate the service landscape and create an enjoyable atmosphere. The many opportunities to sample products mean that the scents of these samples are spread and provide smell experiences.

The company uses no artificial scents in the service landscape; it lets the natural scents from products such as fruits and cheese provide the customers with smell experiences. Flowers located in the service landscape also contribute their smells. Whole Foods' ecological profile means that real flowers fit well with the retail concept.

#### ***The sound sense as auditory sensations***

The music collection includes some 3,000 songs specially selected to provide a delightful atmosphere in the service landscape. The music is of different genres, from pop music to Indian, and is characterized by the soft voices of such artists as Norah Jones. The choice of music is deliberate, so we can say that the company has a signature sound.

#### ***The sight sense as visual sensations***

The interior of the service landscape feels pleasant and relaxed: on light, olive-green and yellow walls hang pictures of rye and wheat, for example, to establish the link to ecology. The floor is made of natural materials in light colors.

The lighting itself is not colored, but when it meets the walls their color is revealed, contributing to a restful sight experience. The lighting

creates a comfortable light throughout the service landscape, with spotlights directed to certain products.

The company uses colors and lighting to create a style that offers a fresh feeling of closeness to nature. The presentation of products gives a feeling of exclusivity – for example, freshly picked fruits and vegetables every day.

Displays with prices and other information are often handwritten for a more personal and natural sight experience. Moreover, boards in the service landscape tell customers that the company protects the environment.

### ***The taste sense as gastronomic sensations***

The interplay of other sense experiences reinforces the taste experience, which allows the growth of synergies. For example, the staff wear aprons that create a homely feeling often associated with excellent food.

The environment of the service landscape breathes food and drink, with the option to sample tastes in nearly all departments. The samples on offer are determined by season and theme. In addition, the London store has a kitchen with a small restaurant on its ground floor where it is possible to order food and drink for immediate consumption.

At the entrance to the store it is possible to sample tastes – for example, fresh bread with marmalade. This allows customers to get immediately into “food thinking,” and the food is exposed as a part of the interior and the idea of the store. Customers are invited to look at, eat, and drink the taste experience. Some stores also have “chocolate fountains” into which customers can dip everything from fruit to cakes. Add to this that food and drink are presented with hand-written displays saying “Amazingly Complex and Rich” and the taste experience is reinforced even further.

### ***The touch sense as tactile sensations***

The service landscape is designed to give customers the chance to touch the products, from fruits to coffee beans. Because the products are accessible they ask to be touched, and placing them in straw baskets or nice dishes emphasizes contact and touch experiences.

One basic idea is that products should not be presented in plastic when interaction with the customer is emphasized. Both hot and cold food is to be picked by the customers themselves, and this touch

experience allows participation. It is also possible to pick up the wine bottles on your own, and they are displayed just as in a wine cellar.

In the service landscape is a cheese room where customers can taste many different kinds of cheese. The room has stable doors that stop heat getting in, to maintain a temperature that is acceptable to the customers and, of course, the cheeses.

The company emphasizes that interaction with the products is important, as physical interaction through touch leads to more buying. Whole Foods follows the motto that customers have to try products before they buy them.

### Sensory marketing – a utopia?

It is possible to apply and develop sensory marketing in practice following the example of Whole Foods. The company has used all five human senses to develop sensations and sense expressions in clarifying its brand soul. Thus, a supreme sensory experience will often offer an individual a more personal touch of the brand: taste the cheese, drink the wine, smell the scent of fresh-baked bread, or shop for environmentally friendly goods without plastic covers.



**Sensory marketing  
requires a comprehensive  
approach involving  
the five human senses**



The central characteristic of sensory marketing is a firm's ability to take the five human senses as a starting point in practice. In strategic marketing, then, sensory marketing is about a comprehensive approach to the five senses in offering customers the supreme sensory experience. Until now the sight sense has largely dominated in practice, but the other human senses will come to receive more attention in marketing management practice.

One conclusion from our research is that many firms are taking initiatives to gather experiences and knowledge of how the five senses affect the brand as a soul. We believe it is only a matter of time before more and more firms start to apply sensory marketing in practice with the help of sensors, sensations, and sense expressions. It is evident that many firms see sensory marketing as indispensable to facilitating and delivering a successful and sustainable symbiosis with their customers.

Sensory marketing is therefore no utopia; rather, it is up to firms to choose the right way. If the third wave is a sign for the future, then a brand's soul is related to both the left and right hemispheres of the human brain. Concepts such as sensorial strategies, sensors, sensations, and sense expressions will have greater importance than ever before. Those firms that do not hesitate to follow the third wave will also lead the development of sensory marketing in theory as well as practice. Among the examples we have cited are many companies that can act as models for companies that have not decided whether they should follow the third wave.

## Epilogue

Sensory marketing has only just seen the light of day, but it is here to stay as long as the third wave is here. What links the third wave and the human brain is change as a phenomenon, and change has never before happened with such strength and tempo as in the binary society. To all firms that continue to surf the third wave, sensory marketing is another take-off for the future.

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