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# BrandSense™

Building Brands with Sensory Experiences



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## BrandSense™ Introduction

### **Executive Summary**

BrandSense™ is a holistic way of understanding, deconstructing and building a brand by taking into account how, and where, it impresses each of our five senses. How does a brand look? How does it taste and smell? Is it soft to the touch like cashmere, or does it evoke the sizzle of the summer? Is your brand's soundtrack closer to Barry White or Bach?

We'll show you how a sensory approach cuts away the jargon typically associated with marketing and branding efforts, leaving only the base elements, or building blocks, that make up a perception.

### **Highlights of The BrandSense Journey**

- > Why is smell so important and why are many companies investing in it?
- > What happens when you put all the senses to work for you?
- > Which companies are doing it well?
- > How can you give your brand some BrandSense?

### **How to Read this BrandSense Paper**

1. Leave your office chair.
2. Go to that place where you get to think and leave the email behind for a few moments.
3. Get your favorite drink, an iced-cold Latte, a flavored water or...
4. Sip and think.
5. Smile a few times.
6. Talk out loud.
7. Think about your Brand in a different way.

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## A Time for the Senses

In a time of intense mergers and acquisitions, many companies are suffering from “Brand Blur.” While we have five senses, few companies pay attention to the “complete” effect their brand can have on people. Looking at your brand differently from your competitors’ and presenting a cohesive and comprehensive sensory experience can create an image that will have more staying power in the minds of your customers and prospects.

Research conducted a year ago showed that aural communication is just as important as visual communication. Testing Intel Inside®, the researchers documented that the Intel melody was as recognizable and memorable to the consumer as the Intel Inside logo.<sup>i</sup>

Similarly, Dr. Trygg Engen of Brown University conducted studies that found our ability to recall scents and odors is much greater than our ability to recall what we have seen.<sup>ii</sup> Clearly, many corporations are losing opportunities to fully exploit their brands.

B.O.C. Gases of Guildford, England, is one of several companies that has carried out commercial scent experiments for clients. It tried out the aroma of newly washed linen for Thomas Pink, the famous shirtmakers in London’s Jermyn Street, and tested the fragrance of fresh leather in the showrooms of a car dealership. Duncan Roberts, B.O.C.’s sales and marketing manager, said that companies have even approached him regarding the creation of “corporate smells” to go along with their corporate logos.<sup>iii</sup>

The practical applications of BrandSense are broad-ranging, from helping you gain a clearer picture of how your brand is perceived in the marketplace, to developing ideas for complete environmental design. We’ll take an in-depth look at the senses. From brain science breakthroughs to psychological studies and startling aroma technology, we’ll dissect the senses and their importance to branding.

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## Recognition and Perception

Every brand strives to impress its audience. Companies spend inordinate amounts of money to create or alter two things: **recognition** and **perception**. Recognition and perception, in turn, can only be perceived through one of five senses. All knowledge, in fact, is taken in through the eyes, ears, nose, mouth and nervous system. That information is stored differently in the mind: some of it is sent straight to long-term memory, while other units of information attach themselves to nodes along pathways of constructed associations – leading to other memories, emotions, feelings, etc. How the mind makes the leap from sight to symbol recognition to, say, elation, is still relatively uncharted territory. Still, barring divine brand intervention, everything consumers know about your brand begins with recognition and perception through the five senses. Like atoms in physics or molecules in chemistry, the senses represent the most basic units in the science and art of branding.

Ever since we began walking and raised our noses from the ground, vision came to dominate our view of the world. Much of the information we receive to enable us to live enjoyably and effectively is visual or auditory. This is clearly reflected in the way we think about advertising and branding. In today's world, we have a tendency to give less consideration to our primitive senses – touch, smell and taste.<sup>iv</sup>

In an environment flooded with sights and sounds, advertisers competing against the clamor to get their message heard may want to focus on these “older” senses of touch, smell and taste. Not only does this distinguish the brand itself but it can also affect a person in a much more emotional, even instinctual way.

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## The Sense Connection

Companies attempt to reach customers' senses through broadcast advertising, print ads, direct mail, word-of-mouth and the product itself, as well as a myriad of other more ethereal ways. Advertising uses visual and audio stimulation prevalently, often to evoke a smell or touch that can, in turn, trigger an array of emotions and sentiments. To appreciate your brand's sense connection, to reinvigorate it or create a sense connection, you must understand the associations that different kinds of sensory input can make in people's minds.

While associations are not perfect, and cultural differences do exist, you can link your brand to attributes and emotions directly through the senses. If your brand personality is "Adventurous and Luxurious"—say, Land Rover—smells you want to associate with the brand might include spices, sea air and fine leather. You might even try to recreate that pleasant "new car smell," as used-car dealerships have been doing for years.

### Translating the Language of the Senses

Our senses inform our understanding of our surroundings. From the sight of a setting sun, to the feeling of sand between our toes, or the sound of waves crashing against rocks — our senses tell us where we are. In much the same way, our senses inform and influence our entertainment and buying experiences. In *The Media Equation* (CSLI Publications and Cambridge University Press), authors Byron Reeves and Clifford Nass showed that audio fidelity can be a more powerful force than video fidelity — movie audiences actually perceive increased visual quality when only the quality of the audio has been enhanced.<sup>v</sup>

In retail environments, brand managers are giving more thought to their brand's "soundtrack." According to *The New York Times*, vw.com found that since it added music to its site, the average visitor stayed five minutes longer.

The use of sensual stimuli provides a language of context, a language that is culturally rich and highly sophisticated. Sinister background chords signal the bad guy in a television show; the smell of hotcakes on the griddle signals breakfast; the feel of cashmere signals quality, and so on. Our senses provide the context by which we form opinions and personal connections. They create expectations that we hope will be fulfilled.

Brand relationships operate in much the same way. Brands have personalities: they have attitudes and communicate expectations. A brand's promise also works in a similar way to the expectations created through the senses. If a financial brand, for instance, associates itself with the sound of a champagne cork popping, the audience may expect celebratory profits.

### Sense Language for Smell

<b>Adventure</b>	Salty Air	Sawdust	Mud	Fuel	Mint	Spice
<b>Tradition</b>	Leather	Wood	Tea	Wool	Cedar	Rose
<b>Nurturing</b>	Vanilla	Baby powder	Apples	Cinnamon	Lavender	Cotton
<b>Sophisticated</b>	Wine	Perfume	Cigar smoke	Oak	Scotch	Musk

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## The Case for Smell

The absolute human threshold for the olfactory sense has been estimated to be 10,000 times as sensitive as taste, with about 400,000 identifiable odors.<sup>vi</sup> Yet few people's sense of smell is so acutely developed. Often we are left with a tip-of-the-tongue feeling – a smell we recognize, are stirred by, but can't quite place. Sherlock Holmes believed that any good detective should have knowledge of at least 75 aromas, but a random sample of detectives would probably reveal knowledge of fewer than five.

The new science of Aroma-Chology was conceived by the Olfactory Research Fund. In their words, it is “the scientifically-based, interrelationship of clinical, psychological studies and the latest in fragrance technology to transmit through odor on the body and in the environment, a variety of specific feelings – relaxation, exhilaration, sensuality, happiness and personal fulfillment – directly to the pleasure center of the brain, the seat of our emotions, memory and creativity.”<sup>vii</sup>

Scientists know that there is a close connection between olfaction and both memory and emotional cognitive processes. This may be attributable to the location of our odor memory bank. The human odor response is controlled by the brain's limbic system, the same system that controls our emotional and sexual response, artistic abilities, perceptions of space, etc.<sup>viii</sup> The additional fact that olfaction is a chemical sense requiring the ingestion of physical particles allows for interesting interactions with other bodily processes.

Since the National Institutes of Health increased its olfaction research in the early 1980's, numerous studies show that fragrances and odors have definite effects on people, from reducing anxiety in stressful situations to elevating or improving mood. It also has been found that fragrances can affect quality of sleep and often evoke long-forgotten emotional memories. Each odor, smell or fragrance, from bananas to roses to skunks, has a unique pattern of activity in the brain, therefore creating a specific response to that item.<sup>ix</sup>

### **What We Know About Smell**

While using smell to sell and brand is still relatively unexplored terrain, there are a few things we know:

1. Odor affects people in a variety of ways, from mood to concentration, memory recall, and emotion.
2. When olfactory stimulation is effective, this effectiveness depends on a complex interaction of odorant, personality characteristics and experimental manipulation.<sup>x</sup>
3. Memory for odor is markedly resistant to time, easily accessed and tends to be characterized by a high degree of emotion, clarity and vividness.<sup>xi</sup>

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## The Case for Smell (continued)

### **Selling With Scent**

A decade ago, Singapore Airlines blazed new ground in sensory branding. By scenting the hot towels that the flight attendants distribute before and after takeoff, they developed what is now the characteristic Singapore Airlines smell. The British Airways business class lounge at Heathrow is infused with the smell of freshly cut grass and the tangy scent of the sea. In another obvious example, Crayola believed the smell of their crayons was important enough to their brand to trademark it.

Product development specialists seem acutely aware of the power of smell. In fact, the bulk of the perfume industry's income comes not from developing personal fragrances, but from scenting products. Cleaning products, in particular, are very carefully scented. What does "clean" smell like? Traditional wisdom, as we have seen, says lemon or pine – but perhaps there is room for expansion.

We scent products because smell is a powerful communication modality. It can be used to reduce cognitive load, and to provide rich, emotionally satisfying experiences. From the waking aroma of breakfast being cooked in the morning, to the centuries-old ability of doctors to diagnose various diseases by smell alone, olfaction is only partially being exploited by brands for its ability to be recognized, alter perceptions, evoke memories and stir emotions.

There are about 400,000 odors in the world, each of which can influence mood and behavior. It has been shown, for example, that extracts from male sweat can affect the regularity of a woman's menstrual cycle. But aromas can also help induce consumers to spend money, and many companies are experimenting with the new science of smell to create optimal shopping environments. "When the air quality is pleasant, so is the shopping experience," says Diotima von Kempfski, whose Dusseldorf-based company, D.VK., designs scents and ventilation systems for retail clients in Europe, Asia and the U.S. "If people feel good, they buy more."<sup>xii</sup>



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## The Case for Smell (continued)

### **Cataloging Scents With Demeter**

New York-based Demeter Fragrances is taking the scent business into the future, cataloging thousands of everyday, as well as unusual, smells. Their East Village boutique rotates in about 150 scents at a time. “Our goal,” says founder Christopher Gable, “is to have every pleasurable scent in a bottle.”

Before releasing best sellers like Dirt, Gin & Tonic, and Tomato, Demeter does their research. “We’ve been developing Gasoline for over six years,” Gable says, “it’s close, but we won’t bring it out until it’s just right.” Working with the Monell Chemical Sense Center in Philadelphia, Gable understands the science of smell as well as the art. “Smell is the most visceral of the senses because it is not interpreted by the body before it passes over the brain. When a scent hits you, it’s a time of year, a specific place, a time of day. We pick scents that evoke pleasant memories and experiences from our own lives as well as our customers’.”

Demeter’s success and huge catalog has made them a lightning rod for corporations and product developers wanting to expand their use of smell. From working to develop a Wine scent with Barringer to creating smells for Disney, Toyota and Keds, Demeter is leading the charge to a future filled with pleasing, evocative odors. “I think in the near term, we’ll find scents more and more prevalent in our environment,” Gable predicts. Already he has helped companies scent clothes, shoes, cars, department stores – and created private label scents, such as Great Barrier Reef, for the Nature Co. By cataloging so many scents, Demeter is expanding our choices and helping to write and interpret the language of the senses.

### **The Technology of Smell**

Pasadena, California-based Cyrano Sciences, is developing electronic sensors that will be able to smell an environment and digitize the results. To give an idea of its accuracy, the company claims that the Cyranose cannot only distinguish rice from cotton, it can identify where that grain of rice was grown.

On the other side of the smell spectrum, many companies are exploring how to bring scents to the worlds of computing, communications and entertainment by digitizing smells. A device the size of a computer speaker will produce odors on demand, in response to user’s actions. This device could be used for everything from gaming to branded smells on Web sites, allowing individuals to create their own odors and register them in a database of smells.

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## Putting the Senses Together

Sounds, pictures, words, smells, tastes and tactile stimuli are not as important individually as the relationships between them and the brand. People react to brands holistically. When Van Gogh painted with green he knew how orange would react next to it. In the same way, when we associate a sound with a brand, we need to know how it will interact with the pictures, or tastes, that are also associated with it.

We must build brands in the same way people react to them: holistically. We must use sound, smell, and taste (all of the senses) as part of the same palate that blends to form a complete BrandSense connection.

In much the same way, any sensory stimuli used must be compatible with the brand or product. A 1992 Bone & Jantrania study found that lemon-scented cleaner was rated more positively than coconut-scented cleaner. Conversely, coconut-scented sunscreen lotion was rated more positively than was lemon-scented lotion. Both odors were regarded as pleasant.<sup>xiii</sup> Any pleasant scent is perceived as nice, it seems, but in order to influence purchasing decisions the scent should be associated with the product.

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## BrandSense™ Cases

Everyone can smell McDonald's from at least a block away, and anyone who has spent time inside a Starbucks has a sense of the type of music they play. So how does BrandSense apply to other brands, which generally offer something intangible – like expertise?

BrandSense is just as important in business-to-business as it is with services companies. A core part of the brand experience is the customer's perception of how you measured up to your brand promise. Did you deliver on what you said you would? Was the customer's experience positive? Did your communications technology work seamlessly?

If you want your brand to be recognized, to create an impression with your audience and a perception of your company, then your brand needs to pay attention to sensory influence in much the same way as product brands – perhaps more. Does your brand have a personality? Are you targeting a traditional audience, or a younger audience with different perceptions on life and money? You need to identify those ideals, build a personality around your brand that fits your target audience, and attach correct and effective sensory associations to your brand.

As your brand develops in the minds of your target audience, the image of who you are and what you do will be transformed into audience perceptions. These perceptions can save you time, open doors and work for you without your physical presence. Your brand should also play a major role in your recruiting and employee retention efforts.

*(case studies on following page)*

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## BrandSense™ Cases (continued)



**FedEx**, already one of the world's strongest brands, has spent the last two years on a complete redesign of its image – overhauling everything from its customer service centers to drop boxes. FedEx understands there is an opportunity to send an emotional brand message at every point of contact with the consumer – from the way a drop box sounds when you close it to creating favorable impressions from the look of bags and carts and trucks. By fixing what isn't yet broken and forming a brand "language" for the entire company, FedEx is leading the way in 21st Century multi-sensory branding.



**E\*Trade**, from its trademark asterisk to its reputation of online excellence, is now popping into the brick and mortar world and bringing its brand to life. The new 35,000-square-foot E\*TRADE Center in New York gives consumers an opportunity to experience the breadth and depth of the brand. With broadband workstations, access to all of their services, seminars, and a gourmet café, E\*TRADE is taking their online brand promise to the senses. Now consumers can smell, touch, taste and hear what E\*TRADE is all about. New ATM stations and a Mobile E\*TRADE Center complete the picture.



**Starbucks**. As its web site exclaims, "The Starbucks Experience is as much about quality and service as it is about the superior taste of our coffee." From its partnerships with Hear Music and The New York Times to its strategic placement in Barnes & Noble bookstores, Starbucks sells a complete sensory experience—the smell of the coffee, the music, the decor, even the energy of the baristas serving you. Buying a Starbucks coffee is meant to be an event that transports you to another place, even if you can't bring yourself to say "grande" when you order a large coffee.



**JetBlue**. An offbeat airline with a distinctive brand personality, from the moment you log in to their web site or sit down in their airplanes, JetBlue has broken all kinds of records in the airline industry. Their message is simplicity, honesty and superlative service spoken in a language you can understand. Their web site is easy to use and navigate. Their customer service representatives are friendly and down-to-earth, and those booking reservations with you on the phone are working from home. They're up front about the food: "We're only providing snacks to keep prices down, so please bring food on board." Their flight attendants actually help you hoist your bags into the overhead compartments. It's an innovative brand that uses technology but infuses an old-fashioned sense of customer service.

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## Giving Your Brand Some BrandSense™

BrandSense infuses strategic business thinking into all of a company's aesthetic decisions, which together make up its brand. BrandSense is also a way to distill a brand down to its essence, without all the jargon and nonsense that often accompanies branding efforts. It's a way of perceiving a brand that takes into account the way we perceive the world.

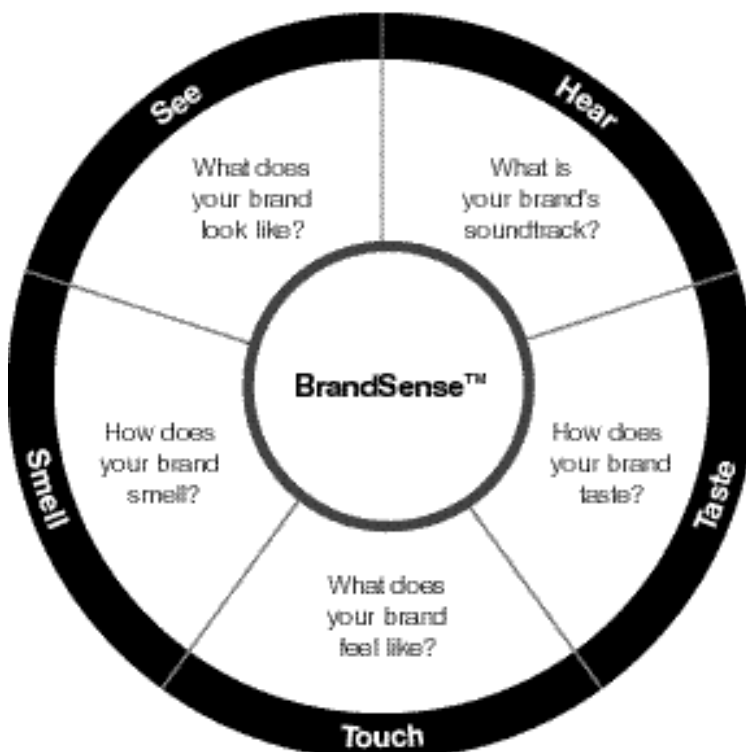
### **Sight. Sound. Taste. Touch. Smell. = BrandSense**

What your customers take in with their five senses is what ultimately creates a Brand Experience. From each Brand Experience comes the perception of who you are: your Brand Personality.

We conduct [BrandStorms](#) to help your team look at your brand in a different light. By starting with the most basic units of branding (your senses), you can more clearly evaluate your brand's personality and learn how your target audience is experiencing your brand every day.

### **The Brand Wheel: Creating Tasty Ideas**

Using a [Brand Sensory Wheel](#), you can dissect brands and build marketing ideas that will impact the brand experience of your customers, employees and other key audiences.



## Quantitative Analysis: BrandSense Audit™, SensePlan™

Senses as a whole have not been given the same amount of consideration as words and pictures when a brand or marketing campaign is conceptualized. With television ads, for instance, the effect of sound tends to be treated intuitively and is typically left to the final phases of production. Ironically, when the piece is completed, sound is granted critical status. Senses such as smell and touch are largely left unexplored at every phase of the branding and marketing process.

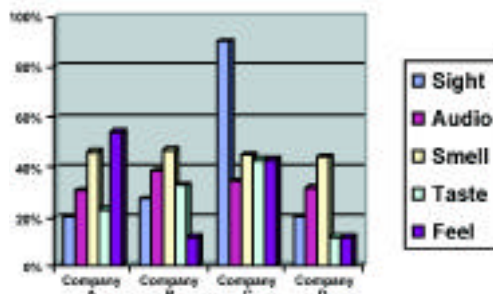
Most companies do not fully understand how they are using the five senses to create recognition and alter perceptions. Environmental design plays a role in Multi-Sensory branding. For service companies, Multi-Sensory branding often represents the most important way clients experience the brand. Yet it is treated as an extension, not as the heart and soul, of a brand.

The primary reason for overlooking the senses is a dearth of quantitative information. Where can the Marketing Director of an insurance company go to learn how to incorporate the sense of smell or taste into a brand? Where are the facts and figures to support assertions about what sensory perceptions mean to people?

### BrandSense Audit™

Harvest Consulting Group LLC has developed a quantitative method for analyzing a brand according to our senses. Our **BrandSense Audit** will look at a company's complete brand and form a clear picture of how it is using the senses, and to what effect. Once the audit is complete, the brand can be graphed and measured against benchmarks. A competitive analysis compares your brand to key competitors, highlighting ignored areas that can be exploited.

### Sample BrandSense Audit Chart



### SensePlan™

Using the quantitative information pulled from the BrandSense Audit, Harvest will develop a SensePlan for your brand. The SensePlan unites your brand through personality and promise, and assigns a role for each of the senses within your brand architecture. By plotting a powerful use for each of the five senses, a SensePlan reaches your audience, and your employees at every point of contact, ensuring a consistent and effective representation of your brand.

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## Conclusion

When reinventing your brand, go back to the building blocks of how your customers create impressions: the five senses.

BrandSense is a great way to get outside of preconceived notions about your brand and go one step beyond the customer's voice. Get to the customer's other senses and let your employees become brand advocates as they also experience your brand with their senses.

Branding doesn't have to be an endless exercise that leaves marketing teams exhausted from PowerPoint presentations filled with branding jargon. Instead, it can connect with the team and their five senses, empowering them to experience the brand in new and authentic ways.

Let the Sensing begin.

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## Sources

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