

Your Guide To Creating Multi-Sensory Brand Experiences

CREATING MULTI-SENSORY BRAND EXPERIENCES

Let's say you are looking for a hotel online and while clicking around you see an enticing web banner for the Westin hotel. You click through and after scrolling through amenities and pictures, you book your stay. Months later, when you arrive there is a welcome kit that includes a Westin branded lavender essential oils kit and a card that invites you to sit back, relax, and enjoy your stay. After a long flight, a luxurious soak is just what you need, so you draw a warm bath, close your eyes and let the lavender scent lull you into a state of relaxation.



“More and more companies are employing stimuli such as scent, sound, touch, taste, and hearing to build stronger emotional connections with the customer and drive preference for their brands.”

This is what you call sensory marketing, and promotional products are the only form of advertising that can engage all of the senses at once. So it may have been an ad placement online that first got your attention, but long after your stay it is the smell and memory of the relaxing lavender bath that is going to be what really solidifies your opinion of Westin as a brand. In the digital age, traditional advertising isn't working on its own. More and more companies are employing stimuli such as scent, sound, touch, taste, and hearing to build stronger emotional connections with the customer and drive preference for their brands. For a very minimal cost, you are immersing your customer in a multi-sensory and memorable experience that has the potential to forge some serious brand loyalty.

So, how important is sensory branding, and does it really work?

According to the 2005 book “Brand Sense” by branding expert Martin Lindstrom, 83% of current advertising appeals to the eyes only. Visual advertisements (think billboards, print ads, web banners) are being processed in the cortex of the brain, which is responsible for a person’s thoughts and actions. Smell and taste, however, are linked to the limbic system which is responsible for forming memories and emotions. If a brand can integrate smell and taste into their advertising efforts, they are going to make an unforgettable impression and can even influence a customer’s purchasing habits.

The science behind sensory marketing is solid and increasingly more and more marketing firms are including the discipline in their media offerings. As for its effectiveness, Nike increased purchase intent by 80% just by adding scents to their stores, and gas stations that emitted the smell of coffee near their pumps saw coffee sales increased by almost 300 percent! Appealing to the senses is proven to be effective, and branded merchandise is the most cost efficient way to do so.



I am incredibly passionate about promotional products and truly believe in their effectiveness to spread those “Brand Love” experiences. At the same time, it is not my intention to cannibalize other forms of advertising and instead want to encourage you to add branded merchandise to your media mix to add value and increase ROI on advertising spend that is already in place.

With traditional advertising, you are acquiring impressions as long as your advertisement is running. When your contract ends, so does your reach. With promotional products, you continue making impressions and creating brand ambassadors long after your campaign has ended. For example, a single backpack can generate 5k+ impressions in its lifetime or an umbrella creating 1100 impressions annually essentially making these items walking billboards for your brand. A bag and an umbrella are something you can see and touch and can become a part of your customer’s everyday life. You can extend the life of your advertising campaign by adding branded merch that appeals to all of the senses to the mix.

So, what can your company do today?

I encourage you to take a hard look at your marketing plan and assess your current use of sensory branded products. Could you promote an upcoming new flavor of ice cream by giving out a custom flavored and scented lip balm? Or maybe you really want to push a new jingle with liquid soap that plays your song every time you dispense it? Brands that appeal to multiple senses will be more successful than brands that only focus on one or two. At Proforma, we specialize in creative branding and can assist you in identifying which branded products will best suit an overall sensory branding initiative. Let's face it, to be memorable in the digital age or ad blockers you have to stand out and immerse your customers in an experience and a feeling. Let's create a sensory journey your consumers can go on with your products and services!



About the Author

Chris Piper, VP, New Business Development, is a public speaker on promotional product's positive impact on brand image and as a sensory advertising medium. Chris resides in Bend, Oregon and has been a promotional products consultant for 20+ years and currently volunteers his time with the Northwest Promotional Marketing association (NWPMA.org) and is a certified Advocate and Felloq of the Promotional Products Association International (ppai.org)