

CONDIMENT JUNKIE

SOUND ADVICE

For decades, brands have been paying close attention to how they look; creating visual identities which speak to their target market and help them stand out in a crowd. More recently, verbal identity has nudged it's way onto the boardroom agenda, giving brands a distinctive vocabulary and tone of voice.

*But surprisingly, **sound**, one of life's most powerful means of communicating, is still considered an after thought rather than an integral part of a brand's communication strategy. This is a white paper on the importance of a sonic identity.*

A new way to communicate.

In a climate where maximising impact and return on investment have never been more important, brands need to squeeze more out of every communication, ensuring every customer touchpoint is delivering on brand values and promises.

So what if there was a highly cost effective way to enhance brand experience, that wasn't being used as part of the marketing armoury?

Well it exists – it surrounds us, influencing our thoughts and moods and feelings every day, minute by minute.

SOUND.

Sound and music can tap into the emotions of an audience. When delivered coherently across all customer touchpoints, a sonic identity can engage and entertain consumers, convey information, help form lifelong positive associations and reinforce brand values.

Why is sound so powerful?

Emotions and memory.

Studies show that of all the senses, our hearing is the one linked most strongly with our emotions, and emotion is the key factor in forming clear, long lasting memories. If an experience is accompanied by a sound or piece of music, then we will remember it more clearly, and on hearing that sound or music again we will recall those memories and emotions more vividly than with other senses. Think about the sound of an ice cream van. From two streets away you instantly know what it is, relive the excitement of hearing it as a child, feel “Summery” and nostalgic, and instantly crave a 99 flake.

It is also recognised that our emotional response to visual stimulus is heightened by the accompaniment of sound. Think of watching a film and then taking the soundtrack away; suddenly the experience is incomplete. In a recent study by psychologists at Zurich university*, subjects were presented with happy or sad pictures, either without audio, or accompanied by emotionally relative pieces of classical music. Results clearly indicated that the emotional experience was massively increased when the pictures were accompanied by music, relative to the pictures being shown on their own.

Sound and music are also closely linked to how we experience pleasure in our brains. The parts of the brain that activate when we listen are the same as when we eat chocolate, or have an orgasm!

* **The emotional power of music : How music enhances the feeling of affective pictures.** Baumgartner, Thomas; Lutz, Kai; Schmidt, Conny F.; Janke, Lutz. University of Zurich, Switzerland.

The vocabulary of sound.

When sound is used to communicate information or emotion, our understanding of it is pretty much universal. The sounds of alarms or sirens, or music that evokes sadness, all share common, recognisable qualities across many cultures. This universal understanding of sounds and their meanings is what we call the 'collective consciousness', or the 'vocabulary of sound'.

By playing with this collective vocabulary, audio becomes an extremely effective form of communication. We can articulate emotion and mood much better than with any verbal or visual language. We can use familiar sounds and musical forms to convey ideas, confident of the listener being able to decipher their meaning instinctively, and we are able to create new sounds that resonate so perfectly with the listeners understanding of the sonic environment that they instantly make sense.

Creating a sonic identity.

Designing a sonic identity for a brand means more than a catchy jingle or an audio logo. The key to a successful sonic identity is a cohesive cross-platform sonic strategy – what you hear in one place is echoed in another. A full sonic identity should determine the way a brand sounds through every customer touchpoint, whether it's on TV, online, in a retail store, leisure or hospitality space, at experiential events, through informational and navigational sounds, wayfinding, on-hold music, or through product sonification.

A sonic identity can have as much, if not more impact on how a brand is perceived as its visual identity, at a fraction of what it costs to produce and implement.

One of the most important factors of creating a successful and effective sonic identity is the understanding that sound can pollute as well as enhance an environment. Careful thought should be given to the kind of sounds used, and how frequently we experience them, in order to avoid an audio backfire. The application of this science is what we term 'sonic ergonomics'.

As with ergonomics in physical design, 'sonic ergonomics' investigates how we interact with the products, systems and the environment around us. It seeks to improve usability and interaction, efficiency and satisfaction; and is an essential process in designing any sonic identity.

About Condiment Junkie.

“Condiment Junkie help maximise the potential of brands by delivering a coherent sonic strategy across all platforms, using an intelligent approach to the application of sound and music, with cinematic production values.”

Condiment Junkie is a London-based sonic art and design house founded by Russell Jones and Scott King. We work creatively within sonic identity design, audio branding and environmental sound design.

We collaborate with brands to identify how they want to be heard; looking at their visual and verbal identities, and identifying how sound can be used to enhance the customer experience and express brand personality.

As well as working with corporate clients, Condiment Junkie keep a constant presence in the art world, creating installations that examine the connections between our memories and emotions and the sonic environment. We are also involved in several research projects investigating the application of sound and music for positive effect within education and healthcare.

Recent clients include world renowned brands such as Heineken, Honda, Nordea Bank, Coca Cola, Jamie Oliver, Save the Children and Ch4.

If you are interested by what you have read and would like to explore developing a sonic identity for your brand, please get in touch with us directly at:

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Work examples and more can be found at www.condimentjunkie.co.uk