

What synergy! Role of Language and the Five Senses in Expression and Eternalisation of a Brand

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Abstract: Noam Chomsky, the famous linguist proposed a progressive definition of Language and its role in the existence of human life as, "A language is not just words. It's culture, a tradition, a unification of a community, a whole history that creates what a community is, because it's all embodied in a language." Thus language is an effective entity, an eternal bridge that connects thoughts, ideas, products and people. Language is words, it is also feelings, it is an amalgamation, an association, sometimes dissociation of the five senses that play a key role in the vicinities of human existence. Martin Lindstrom has aptly supported the above quote as, "As the world of communication is constantly changing, Interaction has become one of the main catalysts." Further, to define the role of Language, the five senses of human beings also play an indispensable role in their description as they are closely inter-related. In today's scenario, 'Brand' is a symbol or outcome of such Language and Expression, to which everyone would relate in one way or another. This paper is an attempt to describe the synergy that the collaboration of five senses and the thread of Language create in Expressing and Eternalizing a Brand.

Keywords: Brand, Brand Perception, Communication, Language, Senses, Sensory Experience.

I. INTRODUCTION

Language is the first essential thing that is required to communicate, to express, to describe, to clarify, the thoughts of human mind. Professor John McWhorter described the importance of language in his book 'The Story of Human Language', "By language, we do not mean solely words, but the grammar that we use to put them together to produce utterances that reflect the impressions of our lives, experiences, and environment, as well as enable us to affect people and events around us." Language being an important part of communication can take any of the forms whether it is verbal or non-verbal. Brand on the other hand is an identity or a symbolic image of a company created through language in customers' mind, by which they co-relate their products or services. The most acceptable definition of Brand is given by the American Marketing Association (AMA), "Brand is a name, term, sign, symbol or design, or a combination of them, intended to identify the goods or services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors." The human senses through which most of the Brands communicate their ideologies, their visions, their inside stories are related to the non-verbal form of communication. A Brand tries to target either on any one of the five senses viz sight, smell, sound, taste, touch or more than one out of the five mentioned above. The language used by the Brands to promote and advertise their

products should be memorable, easily pronounced, and quickly identified by the consumers. To make this process easier, Brands take the help of the five senses to make their image more effective and impactful for consumers' comfort, acceptance and convenience.

Brand elements like name, texts, font size, symbols, graphics, packaging, color, jingle, tagline, scents, sounds, tastes, movements, ambassadors and many other; work as brand association which consequently influence the purchasing power of the consumers. To make these associations memorable, the Brands cater towards the role of senses in order to express their thought in a convenient manner. Martin Lindstrom, the famous marketing expert and guru taps the sensory organs of humans with his thought and language in his visionary book 'Brand Sense'. He writes about how language, thought and symbols influence senses and eventually appeal to the market place. Lindstrom says, "Brand Language starts from the bottom up and not suddenly placed on the top like a piece of decorative icing." Therefore it is necessary to develop the understanding of senses and language before applying these concepts to the Brand. The insightful knowledge of Senses and Language will further open up ways which shall eventually lead in making the Brand Eternal.

II. ROLE OF SENSES

The famous German philosopher Immanuel Kant once said, "All our knowledge begins with the senses, proceeds then to

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the understanding, and ends with reason.” The sensory experience created by the brands gives the reason to the consumers to connect with their likeable brand in an easy manner. The emotions attached with the brand are also kept in mind before communicating and advertising about the product. The language and words chosen for the marketing and branding purpose should work like a bridge between the consumer and the Brand. Liz Doig approves the ideology of working on language before finalizing the tone and word choice of the Brand and states that, ‘Language is the strongest vehicle for creating synchronization and communication between the consumer and the Brand.’ This communication further should be able to speak about the Brands with clarity about its vision, its thoughts, its ideas, its credo, its beliefs and its values. Doig considers the Brand Tone of Voice as the top element in the hierarchy of elements of a successful Brand. Senses also form an integral part of word choice as the thoughts, emotions and experiences attached with the Brand are further described by targeting any of the five human senses. A brief description about all the five senses is mentioned as follows-

2.1 Sight-

Vision or Sight is one such sense to which people generally rely upon easily. Robert Delaunay has very well described about sight as, “The eye is the most refined of our senses, the one which communicates most directly with our mind and consciousness.” According to one of the researches done in the field of senses in the year 2013, it has been confirmed that 80% of the commercial and shopping communication is done through sight. The products are likely to be purchased if they are able to attract the consumers from their outer appearance initially and then with their other qualities. Lindstrom also states that Sight is the most used sense in the field of advertising and marketing; and has the power to overrule other senses (Lindstrom, 2005). It is believed to be most responsive to the environment and therefore has the ability to influence the purchasing power of the consumers (Kotler and Lindstrom, 2005). Now here language plays its key role to communicate with the consumers and there are some words like ‘Free’, ‘Discount’, ‘Sale’, ‘Offer’, ‘Concession’ etc which fetches the consumers attraction towards the product by conveying the idea of decreased rate or price of the related product. The moment a consumer steps out in the market, his first attention will move towards the name, sign, symbol, text, color, size, shape and such details about the Brand. If a Brand is able to approach the consumer for its product offerings on these parameters, there are higher

chances that the consumer will revert to its likeable or regular Brand.

2.2 Smell-

Smell is closely related with the human brain and research says that this sense is responsible for generating more than 75% of the human emotions. The human brain is closely related with the terms like memory, mood, stress, anxiety, concentration etc. which are somehow associated with human experiences. These experiences lead to the stimuli of any such thing which relates the consumers with their olfactory sense. You can close your eyes, cover your ears, refrain from touch, and reject taste, but the smell is part of the air we breathe, it can never be turned off (Lindstrom, 2005). Industries like Food, Beverages, Apparels, Furniture, Airlines, Electronic Appliances, Hotels & Restaurants are known for their trademarked fragrance or odor or aroma through which the consumers not only identify their particular brand but they continue to be with it for its pleasing smell. It can also be said that aromas can awaken memories, activate emotions, reduce stress and influence people’s mood which increase the consumer’s loyalty towards the Brand (Esomar, 2014). When it comes to word choice for selecting related words, then one can think of the words like Flowery, Foul, Fragrant, Honeyed, Musty, Perfumy, Smelly, Pungent, Rotten, Spicy, Sweet, Strong, Balmy etc. to describe the smell of the Brand. According to the characteristics of these words, the Brand will further select the word to advertise and promote its product.

2.3 Sound-

The human beings are surrounded with ample of informative sounds in their everyday life which have a good impact on their moods, memories, emotions and experiences. Sound is closely related to Sight and most of the times they both work together to give desired results. Hence it is said that after sight, sound stands second in terms of leading dimensions of today’s brand building process (Lindstrom, 2005). One can recall the Brand easily if he remembers the sound related to the Brand whether it is in the form of jingle, tagline, title song or any other verbal thing. Lindstrom and Kotler based on their joint study presented a fact that the share of hearing sense in relation to brand building process is 41%, which means its role cannot be ignored while marketing. The consumers’ defined their better experience of shopping in such Malls and Showrooms where there is a light, soft and soothing music gets tuned up as a background music. Researchers say that the tone, tempo and pitch of the track or music playing around affect the mood of the buyers which somehow affects the purchasing power of the

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consumers.

2.4 Touch-

Touch is a step beyond sight, sound and smell. It is a facilitator of communication to the one who can speak and also for those who are unable. As John Keats said, “Touch has a memory” so the memory of the perfect brand will put an everlasting impact on consumers mind which will further make the Brand Eternal. Tactile often termed as Haptics, is a sense of touch which comes from a Greek word ‘Haptico’. It is said that the human skin is known for its innumerable sensory receptors that can be easily manipulated by softness, material, quality, comfort and texture of the product. Haptics is used many times for feedback purpose also as it is a method used to define the quality of the product. The packaging or designing of the product involves a good, soothing and personal touch which provokes such emotions and experiences leading to memories related to the product. According to the market survey, it is observed that customers’ decision making majorly depends on their tactile experiences whether it is Food, Clothing, Car or any other thing. People are habitual of touching the product while shopping and purchasing them. The reason behind it is that the touch they feel stimulates their emotions and experiences which increases their mood towards purchasing the product. People describe their touch experiences by using words like shiny, smooth, sticky, creamy, sleek, glossy, serene, silky, mild, velvety etc. Therefore language plays an important role in describing the senses and their experiences.

2.5 Taste-

Taste is closely related with Smell as it is a universally accepted fact that the smell attracts the audiences first and then they think of its taste. This sense specifically has a special role in industries like Food, Beverages, Hotel & Restaurants where all the decisions are taken on the basis of the taste experiences of the audiences. Howard Moskowitz once said that the mind knows what tongue wants. Therefore it’s a human mind which gives signals about the product and its taste. The appearance of the product also matters when it comes to selecting one out of multiple products or brands and the color of the dish gives hint about its taste whether it is sweet, salty, sour or bitter. Taste is formed from the mixture of these elements and different tastes are distinguished by various combinations with a more sophisticated use of smell (Kotler and Lindstrom, 2005). Therefore in this way we have seen how language affects the senses and how senses further enhance the impact of the language in the making of a Brand.

III. SYNERGY BETWEEN LANGUAGE AND BRAND SENSE

Martin Lindstrom considered the role of Senses and Language as an important thing in the Brand Building Process and therefore presented the concept of creating Smashable language to show synergy between the Language and the Senses as, “The key to forming a smashing language is to integrate it into every single piece of communication that your company is responsible for, including all internal and external communication.” The sensory experience created by the language used by the Brands further leads this concept to Brand Loyalty which shows how it has created a synergy to make Brands memorable in customer’s mind by using any of the five senses. The sensory experience related to the product can say a lot about the product and can also mould the recognition and perception of consumers. The internal and external communication referred above includes all important details about a company, which customers are intended to know by the way of senses. Liz Doig further adds to this as, “Different professions have their own ways of using language. For example, Lawyers use words in a very particular way.” (Doig, 2014). It also talks about the kind of consistency which is required to communicate in business platforms. It demonstrates how a clear, distinct voice can lead to form the image and culture of successful brands like Apple and Google in positioning these brands in the marketplace. She finds that language is a powerful vehicle to bring change and whole organization can witness this change by offering what their customers’ want and by understanding their relationship with the Brand. Companies that have an erratic history of change in the tone, word choice, and literature, have also witnessed a drastic change in their statistics as well as in profits, awareness or engagement. As each sense responds in a different manner, therefore their expression in terms of language used will also be different. The Figure 1 given below describes how expression comes out of the senses with respect to the language-



Figure 1: Sensory Branding

Source: newagemarketing.wordpress.com
 Companies like Disney, Kellogg’s, Coke and Gillette are

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significant representations and examples of well known Brands that have brought about creative synergies between the language and senses. Let’s say, Disney is one of the world’s largest and leading family entertainment and media enterprise well-known and identified by the people of all age groups. There are many things about the company which are famous like two black ears can instantly be recognized by Mickey Mouse being part of Disney group. To make their name memorable, the Disney Corporation has incorporated Disney characters into the structure of their California headquarters (Lindstrom, 2005). In the leading cities where headquarters of the company are situated, the pathways are given the names of the well-known Disney characters or celebrities which make the visitors wonder about them. This naming strategy has helped in leveraging the Brand by extending it to every aspect of their environment. It resulted in the below mentioned Tag Statements of Disney. It says,

“Welcome to our kingdom of dreams-the place where creativity and fantasy go hand in hand spreading smiles and magic at every generation.” (Lindstrom, 2005) The keywords used by the Brands are easily identified by the customers’ as they are synonyms with their Brand names. Disney has been credited with the biggest database of such customers that consider it as a Brand which welcomes them with the words like ‘fantasy’, ‘magic’, ‘promise’, ‘smile’, ‘dreams’ etc. Further it can be seen that the employees working at Disney tend to use these words in their communication as well with the customers’. For example, to wish and encourage their customers’ at a Disney resort or Disney Cruise or Disney Restaurant or Disney Studio, the employees reply them as, “Have a Magical Day!!” So for the customers also it is taken as a part of their vision and marketing. The keywords used for the communication purpose are termed as the Disney-Branded words as these words have larger impact on customers’ mind than their logo and any other thing. According to the Brand sense study, it has been proved that more than 80% of the world’s population directly relates these genetic words with Disney (Lindstrom, 2005). These words are used frequently in Disney’s written publications, songs, story lines, on Disney Channels to create a strong association and connection between Disney and Fantasy and Magic and Dreams and Smile and so on. Disney has also survived the language smash test where without any reference of the Brand, a word, or a sentence or a column selected from the Brand’s publications and then also the Brand was successfully recognized by the customers’. In this way Disney has taken

the ownership of these words by using language as a tool of communication. According to the Figure 2 given below it can be observed how Disney has created synergy using a Smashable language that shows the administrative world of Disney which directly approaches to the ‘Market EARS’ not the marketers.

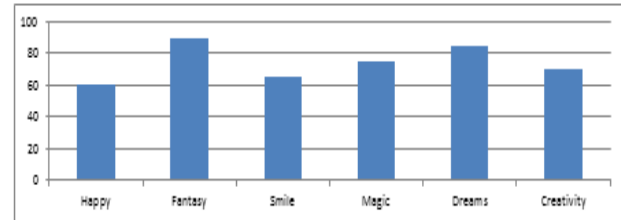


Figure 2 (Source: Martin Lindstrom, Brand Sense, p. 51)

IV. CONCLUSION:

The essence of becoming an Eternal Brand is putting all the senses together in a correct combination with proper tone and word choice selected by the Brand. Each sense caters to the individual needs of the customers’ to which their experience is attached. The Recognition and Perception about the Brand can vary according to the marketing strategies followed. New innovative ideas in an attractive and easily understandable language are always acceptable by the customers’. To conclude it can be said that the making of one such eternal, successful and signature brand is possible if all the characteristics of a Brand are combined together in such a way that the Vision, the Credo, the Thought process, the Motto must be clearly expressed and understood by the consumers’. A smashing thought expressed in a smashing manner, with effective language and communication incorporating all the five senses in advertising and marketing campaigns creates lasting brands.

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