

What is the Future of Marketing?

Once upon a time, back in 1999, it was flashing ads on the Internet. Then came (not in the exact order) email marketing, affiliate marketing, SEO, search ads and YouTube. And who can forget the early days of Facebook and then the growth of social media? Now, people are perfecting dance skills to satiate TikTok.

Each time the next big thing comes along, many marketers scoff, then as they get left behind by competitors, ponder how it could be used to reach their desired audiences. I can't tell you how many conferences I was hired to speak at where leadership asked me to address skeptical crowds who didn't believe social media was really here to stay.

While the Metaverse is a shiny new platform, most marketing won't be conducted through goggles and joysticks ... at least, not yet.

Marketing success never lies in the tools or platforms, but instead, how and why they are used in a purposeful way. Nobody plans to have their marketing strategy fail, but too many fail to plan.

One of the main reasons marketing strategy doesn't make sense is because the focus is on shiny, new future-forward tools vs. first focusing on how to build meaningful connections.

Tools and technology will come and go, but the future of marketing will always tap into the five senses.

Sensory marketing is a form of marketing that appeals to consumers through all five senses: sight, sound, smell taste and touch.

Our bodily sensations help determine the decisions we make. Brands that build sensory marketing tactics into their strategies can more easily connect with consumers and strengthen relationships, regardless of the next "it" platform.

How to Win With Sensory Marketing

While we may not be able to satiate all of the senses with our strategies, understanding the power of each sense can help marketers creatively craft efforts that brand, build and boost business in sustainable ways. Let's dive in.

Sight – We perceive 80% of all impressions with our eyes, so it pays to be visually appealing. It's essential to evaluate branding, website(s), imagery, content, and how is it all connected.

Another point of view about sight's role in sensory marketing is seeing where your customers spend their time and meeting them where they are. This simple shift in strategy keeps budgets efficient and allows for more meaningful connections.

Speaking of being visually appealing, it pays to be aware of your online presence. Put yourself in the shoes of someone in the market for your service. Walk in their shoes and take the visual path of how you might be searched and found and how the various experiences are. What comes up in search results? Web pages? Images? Videos? How would your target audience feel if they read your online reviews — and how you respond to them?

Sound – There are many ways to build aural connections with your customers.

It starts by speaking with passion and purpose. Are your videos authentic, pithy, powerful and most importantly – to the point? Spare the marketing fluff, say the words that matter to your audience and say it with heart. Remember, potential clients want to hear you talk about what you can do for them, not only about yourself.

Attention spans are short, which is why video is such a powerful sensory marketing investment. Be sure to speak with passion and purpose. Your audience will know if you're only going through the motions of reading your lines. It's not just about voicing value, connecting with the hearts and minds of our clients by going deeper and voicing values marries the art and science of marketing with heart.

Weaving sound into strategy can be as simple as embedding videos into more blog posts, podcasting, or doing short social videos.

Investing in sonic identities is becoming just as important as visual branding. More brands are carving out roles for **chief music officers** in their ranks.

That may not make sense for everyone, but take a page out of retailer playbooks who use Spotify to build playlists and connect with customers when they're in store or going about their days.

And, if you don't think hearing is a sense worth considering as part of your marketing strategy, tell that to big brands who go big on catchy jingles.

Smell – One of the most powerful of our five senses, smell has a strong connection to emotion and memory.

This is why hotels create their own fragrances to improve moods and create strong connections. Retailers know certain **scents will make you spend more money**. Baby products are commonly scented with lavender for calming reasons, possibly more for the overwhelmed parents.

I'm not saying you need to follow Oscar Meyer's approach with its **bacon-smelling app**, but consider the effect that aromas have on consumer choice.

There is an entire industry dedicated to scent marketing. If you have a brick and mortar or offices, consider your scent, even if it's for the internal staff. If employee's moods are elevated, they might sound better over the phone, smile more on Zoom calls and evoke more positive energy throughout the day.

Taste – There's a reason why wine tastes better from a wine glass than a water glass. And bubbly in a flute vs. a mug. The shape and depth allow for underlying notes to come out and enhance the product.

Think of yourself as the wine glass of your product or service. Your content needs to evoke the impression you want the recipient to feel. You are creating an experience before you even talk 1-1. You have the ability to enhance what you want your audience to know, which creates an experience that customers crave.

Brands can be more literal about incorporating taste into sensory marketing with food trucks as pop-ups, like **Amazon did with a popular show**, to connect with their audience. Speaking of taste, my 100% no-offices agency has a newfound obsession with **GoldBelly**. We send gift certificates to the team so they can pick their decadent, unique food of choice from anywhere in the US then we come together on Zoom and dine together, sharing our foods and experiences.

In the end, it's about giving consumers something they crave that keeps them coming back.

Touch – While consumers will always be drawn to the shiny new platforms, the challenge for brands is how/if they fit into their marketing mix. As far as touch is concerned, most go for the easy route, spraying a fire hose of content across the Internet, inboxes and social, praying to reach as many screens as possible. But what if the approach was less spray-and-pray and more laser-focused, going for high quality, versus high quantity? Time is money.

While goggles and gloves are our future to enhance experience, successful marketing isn't successful because of the high-tech, but rather how it's used to be high-touch — building a quality, personal connection with your audience.

Prioritizing quality relationships, personal attention and service over the quantity of transactions help you cut through the noise of a busy marketplace.

When you do reach them, your brand should have a clearly defined voice and story. Give them something to relate to and care about. Customers will stick with your company if you show them you care about them, even if that means they pay a little more for a product or service.

Haptic technology (also known as kinaesthetic communication or 3D touch) is technology that can create an experience of touch by applying forces, vibrations, or motions to the user. Future-thinking marketers are already plotting how to use haptic technology. While you won't likely be using haptic technology immediately, look at ways to create experiences and conversations with your customers in new ways. Capturing and processing feedback means you're listening to what matters to them.

Before you Move Forward, Go Back and Audit

While it's tempting to run forward, and you'll get left behind if you aren't paying attention to the future, it's critical to always go back to make sure all the different pieces of your marketing puzzle are optimized and really clicking to support your goals. For years, we have supported our clients with **marketing audits**, getting under the hood of all-things-marketing (branding, website, social media, paid ads, content marketing, email, search optimization, etc.) via a custom **success framework** to identify optimization opportunities and new channels to invest in.

I am all about moving forward and looking to the future, but be sure your current marketing foundation is in the best shape it can be.

A marketing audit sets the stage for a smart strategy, first evaluating what you've accomplished, and finding ways to leverage what you already have and identifying new, creative opportunities to connect with your audience and improving your foundation so new, futuristic efforts are driven back to a rock-solid marketing foundation.

An audit is a fact-finding mission that will help you present the best experience over the life of your organization, today, tomorrow and in the future.

Experiences are driven by sensory marketing, thoughtfully targeting areas to create a meaningful, memorable, high-value experience for your customers.

Done right, the strongest experiences become stories that customers and prospects share with others, encouraging them to connect with your brand.

There is no better time than now to make more sense out of your marketing.

Lorrie Thomas Ross is the CEO of Web Marketing Therapy Inc., a full-service agency specializing in marketing support and optimization, getting clients on the right path for success. Admitting you need help is the first step! A recovering salesperson, she cringes when firms blindly spend on services that don't best fit their needs and loves helping them shift to investing in smart, sustainable marketing solutions. Known as The Marketing Therapist for her stress-free, psychological, and no-nonsense approach, she has been known to stage interventions if clients are making themselves a danger to themselves and others.