

# **SOUNDS LIKE BRANDING**

HOW TO USE THE POWER OF MUSIC TO TURN CUSTOMERS INTO FANS

*Beta version*

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*This is an extract from the full book 'Sounds like Branding', to be released in 2010.*

*More information: [www.soundslikebranding.com/book](http://www.soundslikebranding.com/book)*

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IT ALL BEGAN IN TOKYO...

*I'm eating dinner in one of Tokyo's tallest skyscrapers - 52 floors above the city's pulsating, electronic light. But that's not why I'm feeling a bit high.*

*The electric buzz from the previous night's gig is still rippling through my body. In a makeshift club-cum-fish restaurant in Tokyo's Shibuya district, I witnessed 200-plus complete strangers sweat, shake and otherwise lose their minds to the Nordic mixes I was laying down. As night became morning, the collective frenzy only swelled. Even when the music stopped, the dancing and clapping didn't. The pitch-black room illuminated only by the ghostly glow of waving mobile phones.*

*Yes, music has taken me to Japan, literally. But on that particular night, it had taken me somewhere much more important. A realisation of just how effortlessly music can transcend the borders of race, culture and country. How rhythms, beats and sounds have the uncanny ability to reach into the core of every one of us. And make our hearts beat just a little bit faster.*

*As our dinner ended, my colleague and I discussed the profound power of music. Our conversation reminds me of a question a marketing manager asked me just a week earlier, 'We know what our brand looks like. We have a logo and graphic profile. But we have no idea what our brand sounds like?'*

*This question would not let me go. And as the wheels turned in my head, it only led to many more questions which needed answering: Why do we humans respond so emotionally to music? How can you trademark a 'sound'? How can brands use music to engage people in the way I've witnessed countless nights behind my turntables?*

*Right there and then, I decided to put my DJ career and music label on hold. Instead, I would make pursuing the answers to these burning questions my only pursuit.*

## **MUSIC IS ESSENTIAL TO LIFE. (AT LEAST ONE WORTH LIVING.)**

Imagine a world without music and sound. A place where rhythm, melody and harmony cease to exist. No dancing. No singing. (No, not even whistling is allowed.) What would our lives be like if its only soundtrack were silence?

It seems we humans are hardwired for music from the get-go. Science tells us hearing is the very first of the five senses we develop in the womb. By just the eighteenth week of pregnancy, a fetus can already perceive the sound of its mother's heartbeat. The steady pumping rhythm gives us our first real sense of security and belonging.

Music transports us to emotional states that bring us all together. We've all felt it in some way or another. Whether it's the contagious call and response of stomping feet at sporting events. Or the infectious chorus which gets thousands of very different people, singing in unison. Music is inextricably tied to all the milestones in our life; from wedding marches, to high school processions, to wherever our life path leads. Perhaps film and cinema offer the most tangible example of the transformational power of music. Would a love scene move us nearly much without the well-timed swell of violins? Would a high-speed car chase quicken our pulse so rapidly without thunderous drums? Simply put, music is emotion put into communication.

## **IT'S WHAT YOU DON'T SEE.**

Look around. We're a society completely overwhelmed by brands and their visual trademarks. Coca-Cola and Pepsi. Apple and Microsoft. Toyota and BMW. Google and Amazon. Today, logos and trademarks not only define a particular product or service, to a certain degree, they define the people who interact with them. Mac and PC are more than different operating systems. They represent totally different mindsets about life. That's because brands are 'social markers', telling the world (and to a certain extent, ourselves) who we are. They are part of our identity - whether we like it or not.

## **PEOPLE ARE TIRED OF ADVERTISING. (PERHAPS YOU'RE ONE OF THEM?)**

Each year, more than 20,000 new brands are launched. Yet only a handful survive more than a few years. It's not for lack of trying though. In the 1970s, the average person was exposed to roughly 500 advertising messages a day. Today the number is around 2,000. But more advertising doesn't necessarily mean more awareness. As anyone with a teenager will tell you, attention spans are getting shorter.

Fifty years ago, people recalled roughly a third of the ads they saw. Today the figure has fallen to less than one-tenth. Statistics show that I will have seen over two million commercials by the time I'm

65 years old. (Or about eight hours of advertisements per day, seven days a week, six years in a row.) Though we're exposed to more and more advertising, we seem to remember less and less.

## **PEOPLE ARE IN CHARGE OF THE REMOTE CONTROL.**

At one time, avoiding advertising required a trip to the kitchen or the refrigerator. But now thanks to internet streaming, downloadable formats and hard disc recorders like TiVo, viewers have choice to opt out of advertising altogether. With a push of the button, they can skip past 'commercial interruptions,' directly to the content they want.

All these new technological factors mean the old rules no longer apply. A brand can't simply throw more advertising at consumers anymore, and expect significant results. To get the attention of today's newly empowered consumer, you must engage, encourage and - most of all - respect them.

## **WELCOME TO A BRAVE NEW BRANDING WORLD. (RELAX, IT'S A GOOD THING.)**

Times were much simpler just a few decades ago. Individuals defined their identities by the neighborhoods they lived in, the company they worked for, the church or synagogue they attended, and so on. Though these are still viable factors, modern individuals more often define themselves in the individual choices they make everyday - from hobbies, experiences, interests, community involvement and consumption.

Whether we know it or not, we're attracted to brands that feel 'right' - that on some level align with our own values and world views. Our brand choices tell the world - and perhaps ourselves - what we're about and what we stand for. Are you a Mac or a PC person? Are you a BMW or VW driver? Are you more Rolex than Timex? There's no right or wrong answer, just the one you identify with the most.

Everyone knows branding becomes more critical the more goods and services flood the market. Especially when the differences between them are less discernible. Don't believe me? Buy a cup of coffee. Millions of otherwise rational people shell out twice as much money for essentially the same coffee they could get for much less somewhere else. Reason? They're not just buying a cup of java - they're buying a brand. (OK, maybe a cute barista is a factor, too.)

## **MUSIC IS THE SOUNDTRACK OF OUR LIVES.**

We're spoilt when it comes to the quantity of music available today. (Quality? Well, I'll leave that to the critics.) The latest iPod can hold up to 40,000 songs, much more than a denizen of the 1800s could listen to their entire lives. Some people don't even step out of the door without their iPod and headphones. (Though they'll still probably forget their raincoat.)

A recent study by Millward Brown suggests the average person listens to six different music devices. What's more, 80% of young people (18-24 years old) actively listen to music every day. Why is music so essential? The study suggests we use music to put ourselves in a desired mood or mindset - whether it's to get pumped up for the gym, chill out during the commute home, or just while away a rainy afternoon. Music alters moods like nothing else. No prescription required.

## **THERE'S A SOCIAL MUSIC REVOLUTION GOING ON!**

Ultimately, music encourages engagement. It doesn't sit still. Beats, words and sounds arouse energy, emotions and sometimes controversy. Consider for a moment the meteoric rise of popular social networks like Facebook, MySpace, Last.FM and Twitter. More than half of the visitors go there for music, and roughly 40% embed music into their personal profile. Music provides the spark for people to socialize, energise and organise. It's an engine for social interaction.

## **INTRODUCING: THE FOUR Es**

Anyone who's ever stepped foot in a business class knows the '4 Ps of Marketing'. This model suggests that successful marketing campaigns must have the right mix of product, price, placement and promotion to reach their target market. No doubt the 'Four Ps' have served traditional marketing well. However, considering the behavior of today's tech savvy, advertising-weary consumer, perhaps a few revisions are in order?

Traditional models, though still viable, often underestimate the complexity of the modern consumer. For brands to succeed today they must engage individuals in a deeper, multidimensional way. In other words, the Ps must now become Es. The factors of Emotion, Experience, Engagement and Exclusivity inherent within music branding are why it's so powerful. Music branding is communication through emotions. Music engages people in conversation, and creates memorable experiences. This helps companies build an exclusive position in the mind of their audience, turning customers into fans of the brand.

## **FROM TOKYO TO TODAY. THE HEARTBEATS STORY.**

It's been six years since that life-changing night in Tokyo. It was the impetus for founding my music branding firm, Heartbeats International. Together with an international team of branding, communication and music experts, we help brands connect to their customers through the power of music.

In *Sounds like Branding*, I'll cover the history of music branding, but more importantly, I'll take a glimpse into what the future holds. I'll share with you the many conversations I've had with individuals and companies, and the insights we've gleaned along the way. You'll find case studies outlining the challenges and successes of establishing a music branding strategy, along with helpful guidelines and models to ensure it hits all the 'right notes' with customers.

Yes, this book is about music branding. But it's also the story of my life. Join me as we go to Beijing's biggest clubs, through the gritty back streets of Berlin, and return to Tokyo where I finally learnt the importance of absolute silence.

*We invite publishers in other language areas to translate and publish *Sounds like Branding* in their home markets. We offer a complete set of photos and illustrations, layout and files on signature of agreement.*

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