

# Can you see the light? Is branding a religion? Part II

By  [Melissa Attree](#)

20 Mar 2009

At the recent Buy-ology Symposium in Johannesburg which I attended, Martin Lindstrom drew a correlation between religious beliefs and branding. This article continues with the pillars of religious belief that could be applied to brand building that I've [been discussing](#).



Martin Lindstrom

As I mentioned in part one, a brand is a collection of stories, emotions and associations and the way that you and I perceive specific brands are completely different. Among other things, Lindstrom studies how emotions and neurological responses affect the way we adopt brands.

Here are remaining five of the 10 pillars of religious beliefs that could be applied to brand building:

- **6. Grandeur**

Be exceptional; create aspiration on a high-end scale. The iconic religious places on earth are inspiring and convey a sense of awe. Similarly, big brand flagship stores are exceptionally crafted and positioned. Reach high, take your brand beyond the level by investing in flagship stores/outlets/displays/merchandising to take the grandeur of your brand a step further.

- **7. Evangelism**

One of my favourite topics: every brand has fans... find them and harness their collective energy and use them to 'spread the word.' When Google launched Gmail it was by invitation only; it used the "Recommended by friend" technique. This personalised approach made people feel special.

Find out who your brand evangelists are - they're important, they sell your brand, they are your brand... A smart move is to employ your best brand evangelists. Again, social media through blogs, forums and social networks is a great way to identify brand fans.

- **8. Symbols**

The cross, a dove, a star... all religions have symbols. It's not so much the individual brand logos that are powerful but the specific colours, shapes, positioning - these are the more unobvious symbols of brands that consumers immediately recognise and are drawn to. Symbols hold some sort of secret power and evoke a sense of association/belief.

A good example is the Marlboro brand - despite the fact that the brand no longer appears on the F1 Ferrari, the red and white, the triangle angles, the stripes on the wing... We recognise and acknowledge the Marlboro brand despite the fact that the actual logo isn't visible.

What are your brands visual clues? A specific colour, shape, imagery, positioning?

- **9. Mystery**

The unknown is as powerful as the known... the holy chalice, the shroud of Turin and the like have prompted years of investigation and attention. A 'secret blend of herbs and spices', 'age-old formula' or what is 'really' in Coca-Cola? All

mysteries.

Add a sense of intrigue and mystery to your campaigns... Give people something to talk about to build hype, exposure and interest.

## • 10. Ritual

Lindstrom pointed out that, as humans, we are hardwired for rituals; perhaps this comes from a sense of routine. The advice is to combine two well-known subjects, use multiple senses and link to an original/true story.

Corona and lime is perhaps one of the better known rituals - putting lime in Corona beer doesn't necessarily make it taste better but this ritual has stuck... It also has the added value in that there is a real story behind it and an authentic sense of history.

When I was in the beauty industry the concept of rituals was a real focus - link your product or brand to a specific sequence of events to make it memorable. I guess it's monkey see, monkey do kind of logic.

Obviously not all of the 10 points apply to all brands but the initial starting advice is to pick the three elements that are the easiest to achieve and to start to apply them to your brand.

From my point of view, the biggest points for me were: the importance of the sensory aspect, the fact that consumers will (do?) run brands and the fact that a brand should be able to standalone without a logo.

Whether you agree or disagree with Lindstrom's views and theories you can't deny that your customer is evolving and your branding should, too.

For more on Martin Lindstrom and his latest book *Buy-ology* and its Symposium tour of Africa organised by Global Leaders, go to [www.martinlindstrom.com](http://www.martinlindstrom.com) or [www.globalleadersevents.com/lindstromza](http://www.globalleadersevents.com/lindstromza). Bizcommunity.com is a media partner.

## ABOUT MELISSA ATTREE

Melissa Attree, director: content strategy, Ogilvy & Mather Cape Town, is a creative digital and marketing consultant who has worked on many major brands, including ABSA, Adidas, Big Blue, MasterCard, Nando's, Nedbank, SAA, SAB, Toyota, Vodacom and Woolworths. Attree began her career as a copy writer, before managing the local strategic transformation of the Kérastase brand for L'Oréal and then providing the social media strategy for 5FM for four years.

- [BizTrends 2016] Content marketing trends for 2016 - 22 Jan 2016
- The 4Cs of effective content creation - 16 Apr 2015
- [Trends 2015] Brands vs Publishers - 29 Jan 2015
- Can you see the light? Is branding a religion? Part II - 20 Mar 2009
- Can you see the light? Is branding a religion? - 16 Mar 2009

[View my profile and articles...](#)

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>