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Tactile Tactics



The most overlooked sense in marketing is the sense of touch, reports Andy Johnson in *CTV.ca News* (8/4/07). Not that there's anything new about it: "In fact, the iconic Coca-Cola bottle is one of the earliest examples of a product that came in a package so unique it could be identified by feel alone, even buried in a cooler full of ice and other bottled beverages ... The new MacBook Pro laptop is even cooler to the touch than its competitors, possibly reinforcing a subconscious link between the product and the user's concept of 'cool,'" according to consultant Duncan Berry of Applied-Iconography. And of course the iPod certainly passes any blindfolded test versus other Mp3 players, too.

More recent and less well-known, perhaps, is the packaging for GlaxoSmithKline's [Alli](#), the fat-blocking pill: "The drug comes with a reinvented pillbox called a 'shuttle' that carries the medication. It has a unique shape, can be opened with one hand and is made with soft rubber and careful texturing that is pleasing to the touch." Duncan Berry comments: "It's almost like you're grabbing the hand of a friend, almost a clasp, that's a very subtle but direct connection to the idea of someone who's going along this journey with you — a friend and an ally." Martin Lindstrom, author of "[Brand Sense](#)," says such tactile opportunities are for the taking: "In fact," he says, "83 percent of all the communication you and I are exposed to every day is only appealing to the sense of sight."

Martin also thinks tactile branding is the next big thing, saying, "I know from studies we conducted recently that 35 percent of the largest brands in the world — so the first 100 brands — right now are working on a sensory branding strategy." He adds that tactile tactics work because humans are "hard-wired" to judge people and things based on the way they feel, a habit that started with the handshake "as a way of assessing an enemy's strength of ensuring they were unarmed." Perhaps most important, the sense of touch "has the ability to transcend borders, languages and cultures." Randall Frost, author of "[The Globalization of Trade](#)" suggests that touch has the potential to be "the *lingua franca* of global branding."
~ Tim Manners, *editor*

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