

BBC NEWS

Can a brand create a 'sonic identity' from light bulbs?

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As we move to a more voice-controlled and audio-centric world, marketers are rediscovering the potential of sound to build brand identities and develop a new breed of advert for the streaming age.

Some of our most powerful and emotive memories are triggered by sound.

The music that was playing in the bar where you first laid eyes on your future partner; seagulls chattering outside the hotel on your first childhood holiday [...]

But sound has traditionally played a secondary role to the visual in marketing. That is changing.

The increasing use of virtual assistants, smart speakers, audio streaming and augmented reality, has brought the concept of "sonic branding" to the forefront. It was included in the Interactive Advertising Bureau's industry report for the first time two years ago, and spending has already grown 39% to \$1.6bn (£1.3bn) last year.

While we may think of the visual symbols associated with brands - the Nike swoosh, the McDonald's golden arches, or Apple's apple, for example - sound too, has always been an important component of how we think of them. [...]

It was this kind of "sonic brand identity" that MassiveMusic- the brains behind Philips's new rebranding - was hunting for when it set about its latest project.

Wanting to create a sound that listeners would associate with the electronics giant, be it through its adverts or its digital communications, the team decided to build their own musical instrument that harnessed the first product the Dutch giant famously mass produced - the trusty incandescent light bulb.

The team used contact microphones to capture the sounds of Philips light bulbs and the electricity running through them, as well as human body sounds, such as heartbeats and finger snaps.

[...] Dr Müllensiefen says that the emotional responses to music are particularly important, because we're inclined to seek out that music again in order to recreate the pleasure. The potential benefits for marketers, therefore, are huge.