

Sensory Semiotics™

Aligning product, pack and comms with
cultural meaning for intentional innovation
& brand strategy.

huxly
By MMR

Products and brands live within a web of cultural meaning, and breaking through the noise is harder than ever. Trends are fleeting, spotted too late, and innovation often lacks staying power.

Sensory Semiotics™ is Huxly's expert-led methodology designed to help brands transcend trends and build future-proofed competitive advantage. Our multidisciplinary team goes beyond surface-level insights, decoding the unspoken meaning behind consumer choices.

The result?

Holistic, intentional innovation - shaping intuitive product experiences that are deeply rooted in real consumer needs.



**What is it
and when
would I use it?**

Sensory Semiotics™ decodes the symbolic meaning behind how products are experienced.

Unlike traditional semiotic approaches, ours is uniquely powerful because it blends **diverse expertise** - semioticians, behavioral scientists, sensory scientists, and product experience specialists - into **one integrated framework**.

This multidisciplinary lens allows us to uncover deeper, more actionable insights that **connect cultural codes with sensory experience**. We tackle complex questions like:



What's the hand-feel of security?

What are the packaging codes of mindful indulgence?

What's the texture of wellbeing?

By answering these, we help brands **craft experiences that resonate emotionally, culturally and sensorially**, creating products that don't just meet expectations, but feel meaningful.

So, when might you use it?

- When you have an intangible starting point, like premiumization
- When you want to authentically participate in (or lead) trends
- When you need to think outside the box for category leadership
- When you need to futureproof your brand & portfolio

Case Study

Award nominated iced tea pack strategy

Our innovative approach on this project earned a place as a finalist for 'Innovation of the Year' in the highly competitive AURA 2025 UK market research awards.



The Challenge

Yorkshire Tea, an iconic British hot tea brand, wanted to make a bold move into the iced tea category. They needed to develop a proposition that would help Yorkshire Tea show up authentically in this new space, while retaining the emotional meaning of its beloved brand assets.

The Approach

Using Sensory Semiotics™, we decoded the iced tea category to uncover the cultural and sensory codes shaping consumer expectations. This wasn't just about design - it was about understanding how iced tea fits into the broader cold drinks world and how Yorkshire Tea could credibly enter it.

We combined semiotic analysis with consumer validation to **identify the sensory cues that communicate a light, refreshing drink experience**, advise on **product recipe, pack format and design principles** to deliver those cues, and explore how Yorkshire Tea's distinctive brand assets could **flex for cold occasions without losing their essence**.

The Outcome

We delivered consumer-validated strategic direction that informed product, pack and design decisions. Beyond answering design questions, this work unlocked strategic clarity by:

- Defining how the **sensory experience of the liquid** should be portrayed visually and structurally
- Recommending **pack format and aesthetic cues** (e.g., size of pack, brightness of colors) to signal refreshment
- Preserving **emotional meaning of iconic brand assets** while adapting them for cold cues
- Equipping teams with actionable principles that bridge **recipe, pack and design** for maximum impact

The result? A strategy that inspires creativity, aligns stakeholders and sets Yorkshire Tea up for success in a competitive, fast-evolving category.

The Impact

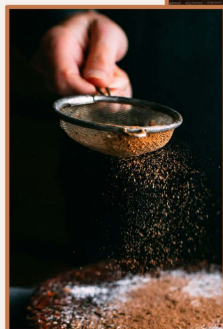
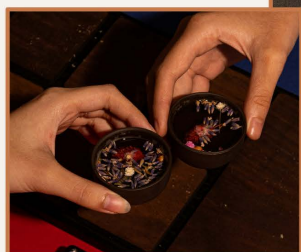
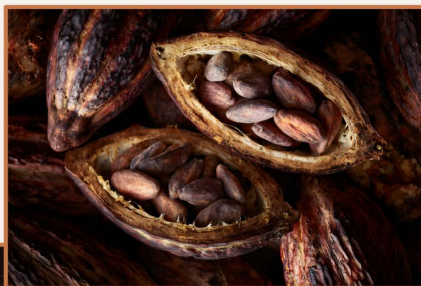
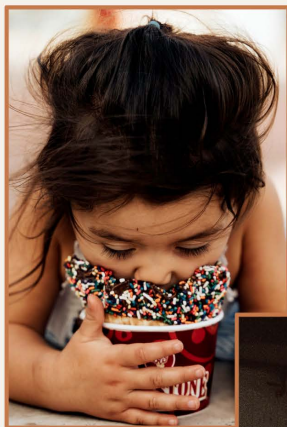
The client's cross-functional team gained a deeper understanding of how to communicate the light, refreshing nature of the drink across product and pack. Using Sensory Semiotics™ provided actionable guidance that bridges **sensory insight with cultural codes**, significantly boosting confidence in the innovation journey.

Client Speak

This is a strong mixed methodology which uses a good understanding of what consumers can't tell you, as well as working with consumers to develop the sensorially built brand, product and pack recommendations.

- Consumer Insights Team, Yorkshire Tea

This project was shortlisted as a finalist for 'Innovation of The Year' in the AURA 2025 Awards.



What do I get?

Our methodology delivers a unique fusion of insights, powered by a diverse team of experts including semioticians, brand strategists, sensory and product experience specialists and behavioral scientists.

This combination ensures every output is grounded in cultural meaning, sensory experience and true consumer needs.

Outputs include

- **Category Map:** Where to play
- **Strategic Playbook:** How to win
- **Cultural drivers** shaping consumer attitudes and behaviors
- **Brand & competitor audit** (revealing implicit meanings communicated)
- **Innovation platforms** to fuel ideation
- **Brand positioning** and communication territories
- **Holistic briefs** for R&D, brand, comms, or design teams
- **Design routes** with mocked-up pack visuals



How does it work?

Our process combines cultural decoding with sensory insight to turn complexity into actionable innovation. Here's how we do it:



Frame the Big Question

Define the strategic “essay question,” e.g. “How are markers of authenticity evolving in snacking, and what innovation opportunities does this reveal?”



Scan the Landscape

Curate a list of 50 brands - both in and out of category - for analysis.



Decode Meaning

Analyze the implicit signals across pack, product and communications.



Identify the Codes

Break down symbolic units of meaning into clear “ways in” for innovation or comms.



Map the Cultural & Category Landscape

Visualize the ecosystem and emerging patterns.



Spot the White Space

Pinpoint opportunity areas where your brand can lead.



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Book a discovery call

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