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Breaking the Silence

- A managerial approach for companies to realise their audio potential



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Table of Contents

Table of Contents.....	2
1. Introduction	3
1.1 Problem formulation	3
1.2 Aim	3
1.2 Methodology	3
1.3 Delimitations.....	5
Part I	6
2. Audio Branding as a Strategic Tool	7
2.1 Contemporary Marketing Practices	7
2.2 The Power of Sounds	9
2.3 Audio Branding.....	10
3. Brand Identity	12
3.1 About Brand Identity	12
3.2 Translating Brand Identity into Sound.....	13
4. Strengthening the Audio Brand	18
4.1 Brand awareness	19
4.2 Touch Points	20
Part II	24
5. Audio Position Identifier (API) Framework.....	25
5.1 Criteria for Evaluating the Strength of Brand Identity	26
5.2. Criteria for Evaluating the Level of Audio Branding	26
5.3 The API Framework's 4 Types of Strategy	28
6. Usage of the API Framework	32
7. Conclusion	34
8. Bibliography	35
9. Appendices	38

1. Introduction

1.1 Problem formulation

In recent years, marketing and branding practices have become increasingly complex and challenging. Getting the attention of consumers has become more difficult as the amount of marketing “noise” is blurring communication further. Until recently, brands have been communicated with a dominant emphasis on visual elements. Consumers are exposed to 3.000 advertisements every day, hence creating a strong need for more efficient and distinguishable communication by companies attempting to communicate to them¹. This communication space is hence somewhat saturated, and companies must turn to other methods in order to communicate their brands through the filter. Sensory branding has been appraised as one of the characteristics of brand communication in the new millennium. Herein, sound is one of the main players, and it offers a considerable means for brands to enhance their image and consumer awareness. Companies are slowly realising the potential of audio, however, the execution remains a somewhat untouched aspect. This field lacks management perspectives on how to create and implement audio elements as a prolongation of the visuals. The literature that exists within this developing field is vastly descriptive and draws upon examples from companies that have already implemented audio into their brand communication. In order for brands to benefit from audio, and perhaps achieve first mover advantage in relation to audio elements, it is essential that the academic field progresses and contributes with theoretical considerations that companies can utilise for the further development of brands. As our research showed, and existing literature hazily implies, the application of audio takes its focal point in the existing identity of the brand. In practice, audio is established as an extended reflection of the current brand identity. Hence, academic literature needs to construct a stronger link between brand identity and the establishment of audio.

1.2 Aim

The aim of this paper is twofold: as existing literature falls short in its focus on how audio branding can be connected to the brand identity of an organisation, the first aim is to examine and analyse how companies can reinforce the brand through audio elements.

Secondly, in order to apply audio to the brand, companies must be able to identify their potential and current usage of audio branding. For this purpose, a framework will be created to make the identification of audio potential more manageable.

1.2 Methodology

The paper is constructed by taking an inductive approach to the subject matter. The contemplation of the use of audio in relation to branding derives from an observation of its increasing occurrence in the market space. Hence, the starting point of this paper is from the gathering of primary data by conducting a paired,

¹ Godin, S. (2007) *Permission Marketing with a new introduction*. London: Simon & Schuster UK Ltd. P. 7

in-depth interview with a communications agency specialised in creating audio elements and strategies for brands². The interviewees were the founder and director of Sonic Branding, a company focusing on branding through audio, based in Copenhagen – Denmark, who both are directly involved with the development of audio branding strategies. The purpose of this approach was to find inspiration from real practice and from various perspectives, in order to develop a pertinent research aim.

The interview consisted of a semi-structured interview guide, which comprised questions with areas to cover. The different questions in the interview guide were covered, however through a varied approach in order to allow input and advice from Sonic Branding.

The main findings from Sonic Branding directed the research focus towards the identity of brands, as this is the starting point of audio implementation in practice. Secondary data was collected from conventional studies and theories within marketing and branding. These were often developed from a marketer's perspective, and hence serve the purpose of connecting practice with theoretical literature. In addition, literature from social science and neuroscience was integrated, in order to examine the cognitive aspects of audio and its impact on consumers.

Throughout the analysis, various examples from companies utilising audio elements are incorporated to exemplify the statements that are brought forward. In connection to analysing the brand identity in relation, Finlandia vodka was included as an example in order to bring about some more in-depth analysis and to ease understanding of the various concepts. Moreover, Finlandia was used consistently in the analysis of a proposed model (the audio identity triangle), hence serving the purpose of connecting visual and auditory analysis with an applicable example. Having established the criteria for the audio identity, the implications and applicability of utilising audio elements were analysed in the section on how to strengthen the audio brand. In this section, practical as well as descriptive examples were brought in, with the purpose of relating theory to real life practice.

The analysis of the primary and secondary data induced the creation of the Audio Position Identifier (API) Framework, which conceptualises how brands can identify their current utilisation of audio components and moreover its untapped potential for expanding its brand with audio elements. The designated positions of the brands served to illustrate the four different categories of audio utilisation, and were assessed by studying their current and past marketing communication. Moreover, the applicability of the framework as well as the positioning of the brands was tested and adjusted through consultancy with Sonic Branding.

Finally, the paper elucidates how brands can move to a more desired level of audio implementation within the API framework, in order to achieve a distinguishable and sound proof brand.

²Summary of interview: See Appendix 1

1.3 Delimitations

The paper is based on a combination of primary and secondary data collections. The primary data consists of an interview with the Danish audio branding company, Sonic Branding. Additionally, one more interview was planned, but due to cancellation of the appointment only one interview was conducted. Consequently, this limits the findings of the paper. A supplementary interview would have increased the credibility and have made it possible to compare different approaches to audio branding.

The empirical findings demonstrated that companies pursuing an audio branding strategy should ideally develop this in corporation with an audio branding company. Thus, no contacts were made to outside companies.

The paper does not distinguish between different industries in which audio branding could potentially be useful. The Audio Position Identifier (API) framework introduced in the paper is based on the premise that all companies can benefit from an integrated audio branding strategy. Hence, suggestions for further research could include focusing on which industries audio branding could be most useful for, such as B2B versus B2C or retail industry versus production industry or the like.

Furthermore, the API framework identifies four scenarios in which companies can be positioned according to their level of audio branding and the strength of the brand identity. However, the positioning of the companies within this framework is based on examining the companies' external communication, such as various advertising, websites and PR material. Thus, the positioning of companies can be perceived to be somewhat subjective. It is important to stress that the framework is conceptual and hence may not necessarily represent the reality. Additionally, the measurement of brand identity on the horizontal axis of the API Framework is measured through four criteria: *consistency*, *distinctiveness*, *level of touch points*, and *repetition*. These criteria could be examined more thoroughly, as there may be additional means to distinguish a strong versus low brand identity.

As the paper does not choose one specific industry in which audio branding can be incorporated, the paper delimits the amount of touch points to what appears to represent the channels the majority of companies encounter. Dependant on the industry, touch points can vary immensely. However, the purpose of the illustration is not to determine all touch points companies might have, but rather to exemplify how sound can be integrated to the most common ones.

Most companies that would consider pursuing an integrated audio branding strategy are large companies and most likely also international or global. However, creating an international audio branding strategy may be difficult, as the effect of sound differs from culture to culture and the company may need to make additional research in order to create a sound which would be accepted in all countries. This paper makes no attempt to investigate how sounds differ in cultural surroundings, but does however create a basis for future research.

Part I

"Branding is like a mosaic, which involves monuments that are fragmented. The more impressions you make the more imprints you will make on the receiver".

Karsten Kjems, founder and director of Sonic Branding (2007)



2. Audio Branding as a Strategic Tool

2.1 Contemporary Marketing Practices

During the last decades marketing practices have been subject to a rather radical shift towards emotional elements of marketing communication³. Previously, traditional approaches, such as Kotler's 4 P's were adopted by companies when developing strategic positioning and communication. This somewhat static approach has, however, been deemed insufficient for the increasingly competitive environment, which is characterised by fragmentation and information overload.

In general, the above mentioned development has caused focus to turn more to the company behind the brands as opposed to the functional benefits of products. Products have thus become brands, which serve to offer consumers added value. Consumers are increasingly looking for brands that corresponds to their self perceptions, and which they can use to express their individuality and values.

The new paradigm of emotional branding has been embraced by the vast majority of companies, which now seek to build relationships with their customers. Moreover, companies attempt to distinguish themselves and their brands by creating unique characteristics and offerings. According to Gobé, a prominent scholar within emotional branding, there are Ten Commandments that companies should strive to meet in order to create awareness and form a bond with consumers⁴. One of these commandments concern how products or brands should move from the functional attributes towards "feel" in order to differentiate themselves. This can be achieved through sensory elements, in which sound is a component.

Simultaneously to the emerging focus on emotional aspects of brands, a new method for measuring brand perceptions, feelings and preferences has gained a foothold in marketing science. The term has been coined neuromarketing and is increasingly being used in market research⁵. The introduction of neuromarketing has advanced the application of audio in relation to branding, as it is now possible to measure the impacts and cognitive perceptions of audio logos, jingles etcetera. Audio strategies can be developed by using neuromarketing as a research base, thus optimising the chance for an audio theme that will be well perceived by consumers. Neuromarketing serves as a radically different approach to target and segment consumers as it concerns the biological characteristics of humans as opposed to psychographics and demographics, which are frequent measures used today. The major difference lies in the fact that from a biological point of view, humans have the same traits, and can hence be targeted through similar emotional appeals⁶. An implication for sensory branding is an opportunity to target a larger audience, without having to adapt drastically to every segment.

Inevitably, people will have individual cognitive interpretations of sensory appeals. Memories are particularly connected to sounds and smells, and marketers must take this into consideration. Hence, when

³ Gobé, M. (2001a) *Emotional Branding: the new paradigm for connecting brands to people*. New York: Allworth Press.

⁴ Gobé, M. (2001b) Making the emotional connection, *Brandweek*, Jan. 29, vol. 42, 5, pp. 23-27.

⁵ Lee, N., Broderick, A. J. & Chamberlain, L. (2007): What is 'neuromarketing'? A discussion and agenda for future research. *International Journal of Psychology*. Vol. 63, pp. 199-204.

⁶ Feit, S. F. (2007) Neuromarketing and diversity go hand in hand. *Advertising Age. (Midwest region edition)*. Nov. 5, vol. 78, Iss. 44.

using sound that is already familiar to consumers, marketers should take a macro view to assess how this music is perceived by the general society. As supported by Cova & Cova, consumption can be divided into micro and macro perspective, and the latter refers to how consumers collectively perceive and utilise brands⁷. Ultimately, consumers use sound to categorise and ritualise with other consumers.

The concept of sensory branding springs from the emotional paradigm in that it seeks to create a stronger visibility and recognition in a market space characterised by fierce competition and many noise elements. Lindström is one of the pioneers within sensory branding and his contribution to the field stems from extensive research within the effect and use of sensory elements in branding⁸. He estimates that within five years a considerable number of companies will have incorporated a sensory brand strategy⁹. The more sensory appeals companies incorporate, the stronger the link between company and consumers. Hence, the incorporation of audio strengthens brand awareness and ideally the brand image. However, it is rarely possible for companies to address all five senses. As a result companies should opt for the sensory appeals that are possible in their particular field of business. To exemplify, at present it is not possible to incorporate scent directly for pure internet companies. In this case, however, these companies might benefit greatly by adding audio thereby appealing to both sight and sound, hence optimising the user experience.

The use of senses in branding enhance the relationship with consumers as appealing to different senses can evoke strong emotional responses within the consumer's mind. Both sound and smell are heavily connected to memory, and a consumer that recognises these as being similar to something from a past event or situation can make her or him engage in nostalgic thinking when exposed to them. Ultimately, the brand can create a stronger bond with the consumer and possibly increase long-term loyalty¹⁰. Moreover, the application of sensory cues increases the added value of the brand and simultaneously the perceived quality¹¹. Ultimately, the brand can benefit from this by being able to charge higher prices for the brand¹².

In order to capitalise on the sensory appeals it is essential for companies to incorporate sensory elements throughout the various touch points, as will be elaborated in a later section. In addition, the sensory elements should be incorporated through a sensory strategy, which should be part of an overall long-term strategy of the brand or company¹³. Lindström proposes six steps for creating an audio branding strategy. The key elements in these are that brands striving to adopt sensory usage should focus on *consistency*, *innovation*, and *authenticity*. The latter refers to how consumers perceive the link between brand and sound, more specifically, if the sensory cues are regarded as being genuine. As an example, the car door sound that many manufacturers implement in the cars should not be overexerted as the user would not approve it as being a natural element of a car.

⁷ Cova, B. and Cova. C. (2002) Tribal Marketing: the Tribalisation on Society and its Impact on the Conduct of Marketing. *European Journal of Marketing*. Vol. 36. No. 5/6. Pp 595-620.

⁸ Lindström, M. (2005a) *BRAND sense: Build Powerful Brands through Touch, Taste, Smell, Sight and Sound*. New York: Free Press.

⁹ Lindström, M. (2005a), *op.cit*

¹⁰ Lindström, M. (2005a) *ibid*

¹¹ Aaker. D. A. (1991) *Managing Brand Equity: Capitalizing on the Value of a Brand*. New York: The Free Press.

¹² Lindström, M. (2005a) *op.cit*, p. 70.

¹³ Lindström, M. (2005a) *op.cit*.

In addition to Lindström's writings on sensory branding, Hirshman and Holbrook have brought forward some pertinent notions and findings on experiential marketing¹⁴. The essence of experiential marketing is that consumers utilise products or brand to fulfil a need for excitement and self-fulfilment. From this perspective, brands have a symbolic meaning, which consumers use to express their individualities and for entertainment purposes. Especially within Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) has this new perspective gained a considerable importance, as it offers these daily products the opportunity to brand themselves beyond functionality. As will be elaborated in a later chapter, this development has had considerable effects on the establishment and adjustment of the brand identity.

2.2 The Power of Sounds

The introductory chapter discusses the meaning and importance of including all five human senses in a company's brand in order to enhance its image. Now focus is turned to one of the most important aspects in the field of sensory branding: the sound of the brand. Jackson gives three different classifications of sound. These are *voice*, *ambience* (e.g. sound of rain drops or a bird singing) and *music*¹⁵. Henceforth when referring to sound all of these elements are included unless otherwise mentioned.

From the above, a question can be raised: How can brands benefit from using sounds in their various touch points (the interaction points where customers are in contact with the brand)? Firstly, one has to remember the description of a brand. A brand can be expressed as a set of the mental associations that consumers relate a product or a service with¹⁶. For example, most of the customers of British Airways (BA) have a mental association of the brand as a "calm, relaxing and classic" experience¹⁷. BA has consistently focused on these characteristics by for example using the same musical notations throughout various touch points of their services for over 20 years. This music that has become identical with BA's brand is the Flower Duet from opera *Lakme* by Leo Delibes, and this strategy has worked perfectly: "93% of those questioned consider the brand's music the most appealing part of the marketing message"¹⁸.

When looking from a physiological perspective sounds affect people in two ways. First, sound arouses the nerves of the thinking part of the brain to function more effectively. The faster, louder, complex or new the sound is for the recipient the more alertness is created in the brain. Vice versa, slow, quiet and simple music reduces the reactions in the brain and calms the recipient's body¹⁹. Marketers have effectively used these physiological characteristics of sound to their advantage. For example, the British airport operator, BAA, increased their sales in their terminal in Glasgow by 10% when using a specific lyric. This lyric consisted of generative music and ambient sounds, such as birdsong and crashing waves, and created an atmosphere where the customers did not feel the urge to "hurry up and buy"²⁰.

¹⁴ Holbrook, M. & Hirshmann, E. (1982) The experimental aspects of consumption. *Journal of Consumer Research*. Vol. 9, 2, Sep. p. 132-140.

¹⁵ Jackson, D. (2003) *Sonic branding: an introduction*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan

¹⁶ Kapferer J. N. (2004) *The new strategic brand management*. UK: Kogan Page Limited

¹⁷ Anonymous (2005) Flying high with Lakme. [Brand Strategy](#), Feb.: 28

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ North, A. & Law R. (2005) SONIC BRANDING: Branding the perfect pitch, [Brand Strategy](#), Feb. 2005: 24

²⁰ Anonymous. (2005) Business: Sound effects; Sensory branding, *The Economist*, 383 (8526): 80

The second way sounds have an effect on the brain is by linking the sound to certain memories. In other words, sounds create associations to past experiences. Capps gives an example why these associations are important from marketer's point-of-view:

"We learn our alphabet through music. We remember all the jingles and songs from when we were kids. Song is permanence. That's what branding should be - permanent resonance".²¹

By using the same musical notation for most of the marketing communicators, the Flower Duet, for decades BA has created a type of permanent resonance. However, the company does not have exclusive rights (trademark) to the song and so other companies such as Ford have also used it in their marketing campaigns. However, consumers have such a strong mental association between the Flower Duet and BA that they actually thought that these different marketing campaigns were by BA.²²

2.3 Audio Branding

As previously described, one can conclude that sounds are important tools when building a brand. Nevertheless, one can raise the questions on how to make use of these tools. In recent years, the concept of audio branding (also known as sonic branding or sound branding) has been created in order to answer this question. According to Jackson, the core of audio branding is "the creation of brand expressions in sound and the consistent, strategic usage of these properties across touch points"²³. Bullmore gives a poetic description of the benefits that this type of audio branding can achieve:

"A unique brand sound, expressing the brand's rich essence, soaring effortlessly over frontiers of age and language, and even binding together all those tiresomely fragmenting media, could soon be the most prized of all a brand's properties".²⁴

One concrete example of audio branding would be the case of the airline company EasyJet. They have used their "Come on, let's fly!" melody in all of the touch points in which customers are faced with the brand: onboard, customer service phone lines, airports, advertising and the website²⁵. The consistent use of the same theme is what Sonic Branding refers to as a *sound profile* of the brand²⁶. According to Sonic Branding, a sound profile will:

- Provide a tool to incorporate sound strategically into the marketing strategy
- Ensure agreement between brand strategy, reputation and usage of sound
- Create synergy in the usage of sound across communication channels
- Optimise communication with partners (internally as well as externally)

²¹ Capps, B. (2007) More than just jingles: One shop uses sound to give brands voices, *Advertising Age*, 78 (16): 9

²² Anonymous (2005) Flying high with Lakme, *Brand Strategy*, Feb.: 28

²³ Jackson, D. (2003) *Sonic branding: an introduction*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. pp. 9

²⁴ Bullmore, J. (2000) If 'jingle' gets a bad rap, change the word, but keep the sounds, *Marketing*, Oct. : 28

²⁵ North, A. & Law, R. *op.cit*

²⁶ From Sonic Branding's sales manual: *sound profile*, see appendix 2

- Provide the company with a concrete standpoint in order to develop/create a sound identity.

An effective way to enhance the effect of the sound profile is through the use of a *sound logo*. This means creating a certain sound or a melody connected to the company logo. The main function of a sound logo is to be “a vessel for associations”²⁷. McDonald’s “I’m lovin’ it” sound combined with the visual logo of the brand is a prime example of using a sound logo effectively.

²⁷ Jackson D., *op.cit*

3. Brand Identity

3.1 About Brand Identity

In the early 1990s the renowned brand consultant David Aaker defined a brand as a “distinguishing name and/or symbol intended to identify the goods or services of either one seller or a group of sellers”²⁸. Although Aaker’s definition of a brand still contains an essence of truth today, the concept of a brand in this day of age exceeds much further than solely the purpose of distinction. To survive in a present-day market, brands have to focus on more than the physical attributes of the product and be concerned with how consumers *perceive* brands. This view is supported by Keller who defines a brand as “a set of mental associations, held by the consumer, which add to the perceived value of a product or service.”²⁹

As the perceived value is becoming of increased importance, it is crucial for brands that their brand identity gets communicated accurately to their audiences. This communication process starts with brands asking themselves who they are, what they stand for and moulding this into a distinctive brand identity. Why is this important? Companies have a tendency of building an image, which is favourably perceived by following the latest trends. By doing so, companies lack identity and run the risk of becoming “a mere façade, a meaningless cosmetic camouflage”³⁰. Companies should therefore form their own unique identity in order to be distinctive and ultimately, become recognisable and memorable in the eyes of the consumer. Hence, before a communication process starts, brands should first be aware of what their *raison d'être* is, who they should target and what their future objectives are.

Establishing a brand identity is one thing. Conveying it successfully is something else. Over the last decade the market has evolved in such a way that it has become more complicated to communicate brand values: markets have become over fragmented and product groups have saturated. Kapferer emphasises that we are currently living in a society saturated in communications. As evidence, he mentions the huge increases in advertising budgets, which is needed to break through the clutter³¹. Even though more and more marketing resources are being used, the returns are diminishing. Lindstrom discusses the example of TiVo (a television programme recorder that eliminates advertisements, which is increasing in popularity in the US) and predicts that 20% of American consumers are eliminating advertisements from their TV screens by the end of 2007³².

Kapferer furthermore notes that we have entered an era of marketing similarities: whenever a company innovates, competitors try to catch up to offer similar improvements³³. Razorblade manufacturer Shick for example noticed the success of the Mach-3 by Gillette (a razorblade with three blades) and soon introduced the Shick Quattro: a razorblade with four blades. Similar market research and technology also explains the presence of parallel offerings. These developments underline the importance of diversification in brand

²⁸ Aaker, D.A. (1991) *op.cit*

²⁹ Keller, K. L. (1998) *Strategic Brand Management*. Prentice Hall

³⁰ Kapferer, J. *op.cit*.

³¹ Kapferer, *op cit*.

³² Lindstrom, M. (2005b) Broad Sensory Branding, *The Journal of Product and Brand Management*, 14 (2/3): 84.

³³ Kapferer, *op. cit*.

identity. If the identity succeeds to stand out, it can engage curiosity and interest over other brands and may lead to favourable buying behaviour of consumers.

Lindstrom argues that the entire communication process should be reconsidered: snappier graphics and more convincing testimonials will no longer do to catch the attention of consumers. Instead, he suggests that we have to “go back to the basics and identify what actually appeals to human beings on an ordinary, every basis”³⁴. His solution is branding by evoking emotions through the use of all our five senses, one of them being hearing. According to Gobé (2001), companies cannot afford to neglect the five senses such as hearing in today’s competitive environment: “carefully crafted sensory appeals can create that consumer preference that distinguishes a brand amidst a sea of competing commodities”³⁵.

3.2 Translating Brand Identity into Sound

According to research conducted by Lindstrom 41% of interviewees base their perception of a brand on sound.³⁶ It thus seems sensible to use sound in conveying the brand identity. The following section seeks to explain how sound can be used to enhance brand identity.

As mentioned in chapter 2, Jackson has identified three classifications of sound which, according to him, classify virtually all the sounds that exist: *voice*, *music* and *ambience*³⁷. Each will now be discussed and subsequently related to how these can contribute to reinforce brand identity.

1. *Voice*: The voice is an effective way to convey human expressions. Singing in particular is a powerful tool to communicate effective messages, as it is memorable and is a communication tool that can convey both strong emotional as well as rational messages. The tuneful slogan used by Gillette, “*Gillette, the best a man can get*”, for instance evokes a positive emotion through the cheerful way it is sung, and simultaneously conveys a rational message.

In search for a voice that would suit a certain company best, telecom provider Orange researched and identified 14 attributes which could define the sound of a voice.³⁸ These include:

- Rhythm the way emphasis is placed on what’s said
- Pitch high or low
- Melody the way rhythm and pitch is combined
- Pace the speed of delivery
- Musical tone the overall musical quality of the voice
- Intonation the way in which what is said is related to how it is said
- Energy through expressing engagement with the content
- Clarity the clarity of the voice
- Muscular tension muscular tension governing the sound of the voice
- Resonance the place of vibration for the voice (nose, throat, chest)
- Pause using pauses to add meaning between the words

³⁴ Lindstrom, M., (2005b), *op.cit*

³⁵ Gobé, M. (2001a), *op.cit*

³⁶ Lindstrom, M. (2005a), *op.cit*

³⁷ Jackson, D., *op.cit*

³⁸ Jackson, D., *op.cit*

- Breath how and when you breathe
- Commitment communicating belief in what's said
- Volume the amount of sound produced

By first assigning a personality to the brand these vocal attributes can then be matched to the personality and hence create a representative voice for the brand.

2. *Music*: An advantage of music is that it can incorporate all types of sounds into a memorable melody. Especially in conveying a brand identity, music has proven to be effective as it can highly influence emotions.

Music can communicate a brand identity through several elements, of which Jackson discusses four:³⁹

- Melody: A series of musical notes that make up a tune. It requires low involvement from the listener in order for it to become recognisable and memorable, and is seen as the heart of the music.
- Harmony: Notes that are used to complement the melody. Even though audio branding is not intended for advanced musical structures, the harmony can reinforce the message being conveyed.
- Key signature: The key in which the music is written describes the related notes that should be used. Generally these can be divided into major and minor keys: major keys portray a comforting sound whilst minor keys tend to sound interesting.
- Time signature: This defines the rhythmic feeling and it includes musical instruments which should be used. By altering the four elements, a brand can accurately convey its brand identity through music.

3. *Ambience*: Ambient sounds include a wide variety of sounds such as the sound of machines, the weather, animals but also background noises in a shopping mall. Generally, ambience can be divided into *ambient styles* (sounds of a background context) and *sound effects* (events such as a sound of thunder). Ambient sounds can be used to emphasise the characteristics of a brand. The sound of water can for instance highlight a fresh identity of a brand.

Having identified the three elements of sound and the extent to which they can enhance a brand identity, a conceptual model has been created which visualises how brands could be able to use sound in portraying their identity. This model is coined as the audio identity triangle (figure 3):

³⁹ *Ibid*

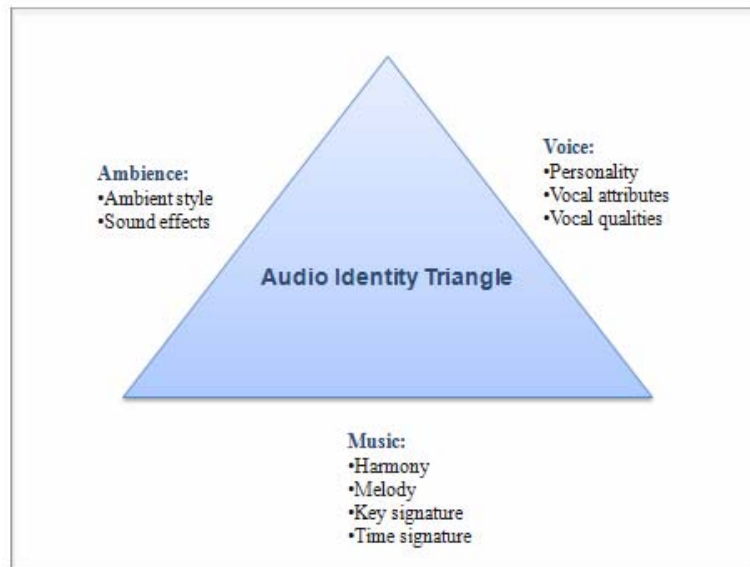


Fig. 3: The audio identity triangle

All elements can be used separately but can also be used in combination with each other to convey a brand identity (figure 5). It should be noted that this model comprises a suggestive approach and does not imply that sound cannot enhance brand identity otherwise.

Before the audio identity triangle can be applied, a brand has to first reveal its identity. Kapferer suggests a hexagonal prism to reveal a company's brand identity, which he coins as the brand identity prism.⁴⁰

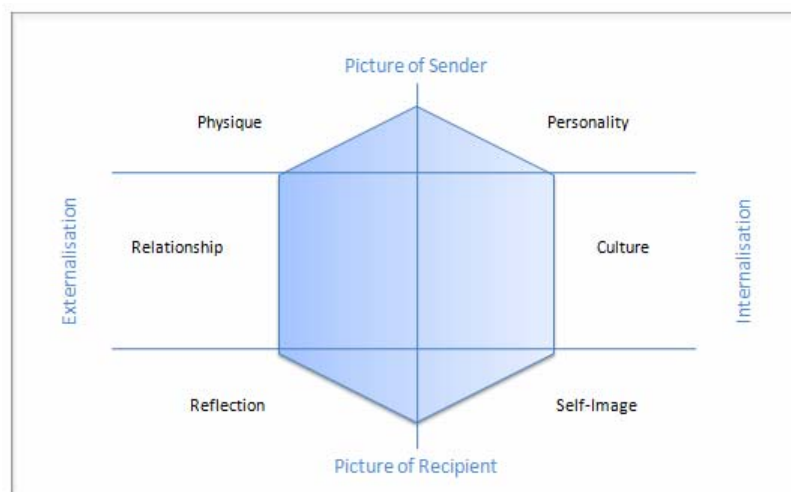


Fig. 4: The Brand Identity Prism

1. *Physique* : Product related attributes and tangible added values.
2. *Personality*: The character of a brand if it would be portrayed as a person.
3. *Culture* : A source for core values for the company behind the brand.

⁴⁰ Kapferer, J. *op.cit*

4. *Relationship*: How the brand creates interaction with its users.
5. *Reflection* : A reflection of the stereotypical target user.
6. *Self-Image* : The image a user has of herself while using the brand.

To clarify this model, an example of the Finlandia vodka brand will be illustrated through combining the brand identity prism (figure 4) with the audio identity triangle.

Finlandia Vodka

Finlandia vodka is known for its pure and natural image related to Finnish culture, and is positioned as a premium spirit. The shape of the bottle is related to Finnish design and represents melting ice and the ingredients include the high quality of Finnish glacial water⁴¹. Based on these brand characteristics, the brand identity prism has been worked out to produce the following graph:

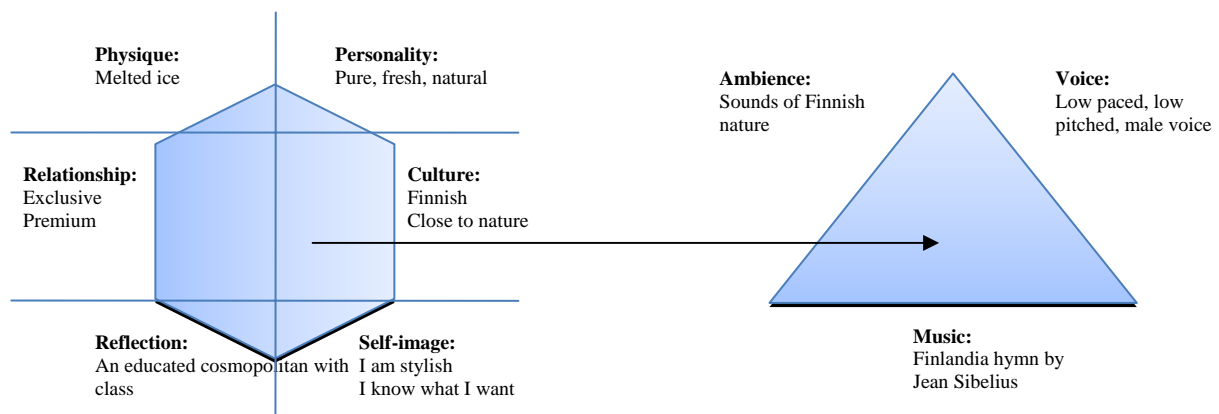


Fig. 5: Applying the Finlandia brand identity prism to the audio identity triangle

1. *Ambience*: Since Finlandia vodka identifies itself with Finnish nature, an obvious ambience sound would be the background sound of Finnish nature: wind blowing, water dripping and birds singing.
2. *Voice*: To underline the premium aspect of Finlandia vodka, quality vocal attributes can be selected accordingly. This includes a low paced, low pitched, male voice.
3. *Music*: Jean Sibelius, an early 20th century Finnish classical composer, composed the serenely melodic *Finlandia hymn* which was meant to portray the beauty of the Finnish landscape. The melody is memorable; the harmony underlines the Finnish beauty, the key signature evokes a feeling for desire, and the classical instruments portray an image of elegance. Hence, this piece of music could excellently portray the brand identity of Finlandia.

⁴¹ Finlandia's web site [2007]: <http://www.finlandia.com>. Retrieved 2007-12-02

The above graph visualises the possibilities for Finlandia vodka to use sound in conveying their brand identity. It is meant as a source for inspiration to create a sound for the brand and thus the given suggestions are merely examples of how the audio identity triangle can be applied in practice.

4. *Strengthening the Audio Brand*

Based on a British consumer research programme of 50 leading brands and their experiences in the audio branding-industry, Jackson provided four key-lessons for successful audio branding. These are:

1. Be frequent or consistent over a long period
2. If you want people to remember your brand name when they hear your audio branding, make sure you say the name
3. Link your audio branding to a benefit of your brand
4. Be creative, be distinct and remember that nobody is listening!⁴²

For the first point, a good example of a consistent use of audio branding would be the case of BA mentioned earlier in the paper. Another example would be Nestlé's Kit Kat, which has used a consistent sound image (the chunkiness of the product) since the 1950's. Examples of audio branding efforts that have been successful due to their frequency are Carphone Warehouse's landline product Talk Talk and McDonald's "I'm lovin' it" campaign⁴³.

Secondly, Intel's sonic logo is one of the most successful and most quoted examples of audio branding. However, in his studies Jackson found out that although 90% of the respondents were familiar with the sound only 38% could identify the name of the brand.⁴⁴ This underlines the second key-lesson in Jackson's studies. In order to make sure that the recipient connects the sound with the right product it is beneficial to cite the name of the product simultaneously to the visual representation.

Thirdly, by linking the benefit of the brand to the sound of the brand, consumers are brought closer to the actual brand identity that the company wants to portray. Cadillac enhanced its luxurious image by succeeding to acquire a very limited licensed Led Zeppelin's song "Rock and Roll" in its advertising campaigns.⁴⁵ Starbucks emphasises the benefit of its brand, a warm and cosy atmosphere, with "easy listening, slightly jazzy, soulful tunes" in its outlets⁴⁶.

Finally, in audio branding, like in all branding activities, being creative is vital for success. The promotion of Audi TT Roadster for women in France was successful because of the creative use of music. To portray the feeling of actually driving the car, the advertising agency compiled a soundtrack of cover-songs (e.g. "Riders on the Storm" with a hip-hop flavour) that was sent to subscribers of French Elle. This compilation gave the listeners an overall experience of the feeling to drive the Roadster⁴⁷. The importance of being distinct is also emphasised in research by North & Law. Their survey showed that "Ads with music that 'fits' the brand are 96% more likely for the ad claim to be recalled than those with non-fit music and 47%

⁴² Jackson, D. (2006) RESEARCH AUDIO BRANDING: Orchestrating a sound strategy, *Brand Strategy*, Feb.: 38

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ Capps, B. (2007) More than just jingles: One shop uses sound to give brands voices, *Advertising Age*, 78 (16)

⁴⁶ North A. & Law R. *op.cit*

⁴⁷ Capps B. *op.cit*

more than ads with no music”⁴⁸. This could also be interpreted as a warning sign for companies getting into audio branding. The choice of music must be evaluated extremely carefully because non-fit music causes a deeper decrease in recall than not using music at all.

The final point that Jackson makes in his key-lessons is that nobody is really listening. Because consumers are constantly surrounded by various commercial stimulants, getting the message through is quite difficult. Arnold illustrates this problem by referring to the passivity of the recipient in relation to TV-advertisements: “Statistics show that 50% of people are in a way, occupied while the TV is on. That figure jumps to 85% when a commercial kicks in...”⁴⁹. A solution to this problem offered by Jackson is to use more complex and melodic audio messages. This causes the recipients to shift from passive hearing into active listening⁵⁰.

4.1 Brand awareness

To support Jackson’s criterion of frequency and consistency for audio brands, it is essential to put emphasis on creating and sustaining brand awareness. At present, the majority of organisations use traditional marketing methods as a way of creating brand awareness. However, it seems that the concept of audio branding can generate the same brand recognition as a visual identity brand identity alone⁵¹. Studies have shown that sound and memory have strong associations⁵². Sound can be considered to be an integrated part of our everyday life and culture. Hence, it can play an immense part in delivering the brand experience both for retailers, and in the service and entertainment industries. However, many companies fail to recognise this opportunity and focuses mainly on the visual identity of the brand.

In the increasingly competitive business environment, consumers are faced with too much information, which makes it difficult for companies to differentiate. Hence, instead of focusing merely on the visual identity companies should look elsewhere to enhance their brand identity. In relation to this, the strategic use of sound to create memory and experience can prove a strong brand differentiator⁵³.

A number of research surveys have indicated that sound has a strong ability to enhance brand recall⁵⁴. From a company perspective, this knowledge is vital as the use of sound elements to communicate a brand can be used to enhance the brand’s identity. If sound or music is played while creating a memorable interaction with the consumer, the possibility of internalising this experience into the memory which would easily be recalled in the future is more likely. Hence, brand managers are increasingly using in-store music strategically, as it has the capability to increase sales by 38.2 %⁵⁵. However, companies have numerous interaction points (touch points) with consumers, from the logo to the experience of the product itself. By

⁴⁸ North A. & Law R. *op.cit*

⁴⁹ Arnold S. (2007) That Jingle Is Part of Your Brand, *Broadcasting & Cable*, 135 (4): 78

⁵⁰ Jackson D., ‘RESEARCH AUDIO BRANDING: Orchestrating a sound strategy’, *Brand Strategy*, Feb. 2006

⁵¹ Anonymous (2001) Audio Branding. Magazine: *Credit Union Management*, March 2001

⁵² Jackson, D. [2007]: *An introduction to Sonic Branding*, www.sonicbrand.com, Retrieved 2007-12-11

⁵³ *Music enhances brand recall abilities*: <http://www.bizcommunity.com/Article/196/82/15721.html#contact#contact>

⁵⁴ *Ibid*

⁵⁵ *Ibid*

extending audio branding into the different touch points, such as products, services and promotions, companies have more ways to grow brand value and increase brand awareness.

4.2 Touch Points

Having outlined the different means of achieving brand awareness, the catalysts for creating consistency, namely the touch points, will be elaborated. The increasing focus on touch point is a rather new phenomenon, which is likely to have emerged as a sub category to Customer Relationship Management (CRM)⁵⁶. There are various definitions of the constituents of touch points, however, in this paper the concept will be referred to as the various situations in which the consumer encounters a brand. In order to increase awareness and brand preference, it is crucial that companies exploit their various touch points. The amount of touch points varies from company to company as well as the industry they operate in. Jackson brings forward an outline of the various touch points⁵⁷. Due to the scope of the paper, all of them will not be dealt with separately in this chapter. As an alternative four main categories constituting the majority have been identified and serve as a generic overview of the touch points that many companies have (figure 6). These categories encompass 1.) the product/service, 2.) media communication, 3.) retail, 4.) after sales/IVR, and 5.) web. It is hence acknowledged that the following framework is by no means exhaustive; however it should serve its purpose of clarifying the relation between the different touch points and the various factors that influence and shape them.

The former chapter on brand identity and image elucidated how companies can exploit their core values through the audio identity triangle. This core can be utilised and restructured throughout the various touch points. Of greatest importance when doing so is to remain consistent and congruous to the core identity. Aaker utilises the terminology *core identity* and *extended identity*⁵⁸. In relation to audio, the first mentioned is analogous to the sound profile, and the latter refers to the dynamic aspect of the brand, which can be changed and modernised according to developments in consumer behaviour etcetera. Oftentimes it is not beneficial, or possible, to utilise the exact same audio throughout the various touch points. In the following section the main touch points will be explained and their characteristics and implications briefly explained in order to bring forward further recommendations.

⁵⁶ Collins, S., Nair, G. & Schumacher, J. (2006) Reaching the Next Level of Performance in Marketing. *Customer Relationship Management*. May, Vol. 10, 5, pp. 48.

⁵⁷ Jackson, D. M. (2003) *op.cit.* pp. 6

⁵⁸ Aaker, D. A. (1996) *Building Strong Brands*. London: The Free Press.

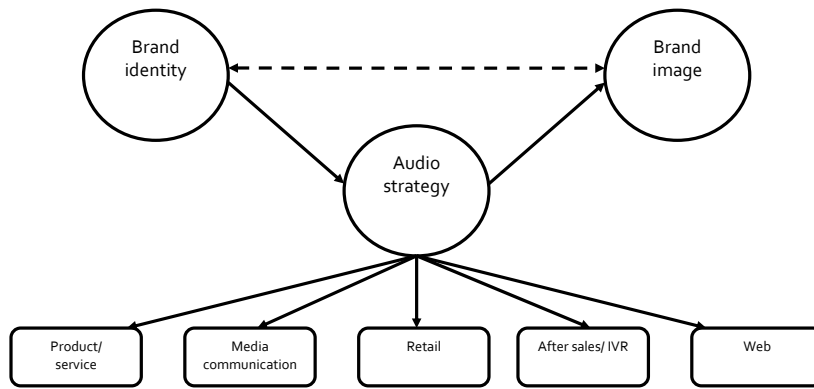


Fig. 6: Conceptual Framework for Main Audio Touch Points

The Audio Strategy in Practice

In addition to creating a strong correlation between the existing brand identity and the audio identity, as described in an earlier chapter, it is essential for companies to have specific guidelines for the type of audio used and how. The audio strategy serves a crucial role in implementing and utilising audio. It is prepared by identifying the core elements of the brand or corporate identity with the use of audio identity triangle as described in the previous chapter. However, due to the fact that audio as a strategy is a rather new phenomenon, companies adopting an audio strategy are currently opting for audio branding consultants. Sonic Branding creates the audio branding strategy through interaction with managers and employees for the purpose of revealing the true core of the brand identity. The strategy often covers various touch points and companies develop an audio manual, in which the core of the strategy is described. For instance, if the core identity of the brand is *tradition* and *royalty*, then the audio strategy should encompass these elements and make them transferable to the various touch points. Hence the audio strategy represents both an extended identity of the current brand identity. In addition, the audio strategy also comprises its own core in which the touch points are extensions. As the dotted line in figure 6 illustrates, there is a dynamic correlation between the brand identity and the brand image. This implies that the audio might affect the brand image and subsequently possibly cause alterations of the brand identity if beneficial.

Inevitably, the touch points also have an effect on each other, although not illustrated. As an example, when audio is implemented into the product, the sound that is used in marketing communication should be similar in order for the audience to connect the commercial to the brand. Naturally, the process might skip some of the various touch points, however what remains of importance is that all touch points used share the same core.

1. The Product/Service

As described in a previous chapter, the *sound logo* is connected to the core of the brand. It is often used for intangible products by brands such as Intel, in which case it seeks to make the brand memorable as the consumer is not likely to remember the actual product. Sound is also implemented in actual physical

products. Several car manufacturers have developed and implemented specific “click” audio elements when the car door is closed. The purpose is to illustrate the quality of the car, as studies have shown that consumers expect the “click” sound for a quality car. A different example is the Tic Tac mints, which heavily focuses on the sound of the product. The different commercials present the recognisable feature of Tic Tac’s; the click of opening as well as the shaking of the plastic container⁵⁹. The essence of these brands is that the sound reflects the core identity. In the case of Tic Tac, the sound is the main characteristic of the product and the sound will be recognised by other users, hence optimising the visibility of the product in the market. Thus, it is essential for brands to reflect the core identity as elaborated in a previous chapter. In order to be successful and gain recognition and recall, the sound should remain stable over time. However, the message or suggested usage of the brand can be adjusted according to consumer trends, as the following section will elucidate.

2. *Media Communication*

In addition to staying tuned to the core identity as described above, the brand can epitomise various extended identities through media communication⁶⁰. This umbrella term covers the various communication channels that the brand uses to communicate with its audiences. Examples of these are TV/cinema commercials, radio spots, conferences and various PR events⁶¹. Oftentimes these channels serve to increase consumer awareness and additionally to enhance the consumer perception of the connection between brand values and brand offering.

3. *Retail*

This element refers to the various instances when the consumer is in direct contact with the brand by an intention to buy or gain more information. Often this will be in a retail setting, and there is a paradox found herein, as not all brands have the opportunity for exploiting this channel. Not many brands have own stores in which they can fully implement their audio logo and identity. The majority of brands are available in retail settings that contain many different brands. Oftentimes the audio used in these settings will consist of music, which in general reflects the identity of the retail chain and not the specific brands. The individual brands can make use of this channel by using TV’s and product demonstrations including sound in the retail setting. The risk by doing so, however, as Jackson points out is that staff and consumers oftentimes spend a considerable amount of time in store and hence find the use of repetitive audio a nuisance⁶². A means to avoid this factor is to use subtle audio both in relation to volume and length of piece of audio clip. In other words, the constant repetition of the sound logo in this setting fosters irritation rather than desired recognition and perception. Brands opting for this channel should hence aim for utilisation of their audio identity (theme) as it conveys the identity without displeasing the various stakeholders.

⁵⁹ Tic Tac website: <http://www.tictacusa.com/entertainment.php>. Retrieved 2007-12-08

⁶⁰ Aaker, D. A. (1996) *op.cit*

⁶¹ Jackson, D. M.(2003) *op.cit*, p. 6

⁶² *Ibid*, pp. 7

4. *After Sales / IVR*

In order to exploit the brand audio in a long-term perspective, companies should strive to implement the audio in IVR (Interactive Voice Response) and other channels that the consumer might encounter after purchasing the product or service. According to Sonic Branding, most companies have not realised the importance of creating telephone profiles that reflect the identity of the brand. This becomes an obstacle in that it fails to communicate the values of the company, and consequently some of the credibility is lost or damaged. Often for IVR it is recommended to use a voice of a person external to the company⁶³ as it makes it possible to create a consistent voice identity, which is a feature that consumers or clients appreciate. In addition, it is equally important not to utilise the voice of a person that is used by many companies as it does not appear authentic. This concerns both the IVR and general media communication.

5. *Web*

One of the most important touch points is the Internet. This channel is interrelated to media communication, however in the above illustration it has been separated in order to stress its importance. This touch point represents both the brand web site and advertisements on the net. The majority of brands, at least the higher-involvement, have a web site to communicate its values and other information. Presently, many companies operating online fail to exploit this channel in relation to audio⁶⁴. In addition to being a crucial point for communication, web sites are limited in their sensory appeal. Sound is in fact the only additional appeal that can be implemented and should hence be exploited to the extent possible. This can be done through regular background music, such as heard on the Finlandia web site as well as playing the audio logo in order to create a stronger connection to commercials in which the audio logo is used.

A recent trend is for brands to place their sound logos as POD (Play-On-Demand), which brand devotees download and use as ring tones for their mobile phones or MP3 players. A company that has already exploited this new channel is Coca Cola. The sound logo can be downloaded and used for the mobile. Moreover, the company offers its own “coke music”, which users can engage in like a regular radio channel⁶⁵. Undoubtedly, the majority of companies will not be able to implement such an extensive service, yet most companies will benefit from using their sound logo and sound profile as much as possible through this channel.

⁶³ Klie, L. (2007) *Not Everyone Has a PHONE VOICE*. *Speech Technology*. Vol. 12, 3, Apr. ABI/UNIFORM Global pp. 28

⁶⁴ Jackson, D. M. (2003) *op.cit.*

⁶⁵ Coca Cola web sites [2007] http://www.music.coca-cola.com/home?siteLanguage=en_GB & <http://www.coca-cola.dk/action/Go/page/mp3>. Retrieved 2007-12-12

Part II

“...distinctive brands require something more. They have to be powered up to deliver a full sensory and emotional experience. It is not enough to present a product or service visually in an ad. It pays to attach a sound, such as music or powerful words and symbols”

Dr. Philip Kotler (2005)



5. Audio Position Identifier (API) Framework

As have been established previously in the paper, sound has proven to have a positive effect on brand recall and ultimately increase brand awareness. Hence, it seems relevant to look at which ways audio branding can be incorporated into an organisation's overall branding strategy. Thus, the API Framework (fig. 7) illustrating different scenarios is introduced below.



Fig. 7: Audio Position Identifier (Strength of a Brand Identity vs. Level of Audio Branding)

The purpose of the framework is to conceptualise different scenarios organisations can be positioned in according to their existing use of audio branding initiatives. The framework helps to establish how or if organisations make use of audio branding and describes the advantages and disadvantages of the different positioning. Hence, the framework is descriptive in that it attempts to conceptualise different scenarios of incorporating audio branding into an overall branding strategy. The positioning of companies in the framework is based on criteria for measuring the vertical and horizontal axis, which will be elaborated on in the following section. Furthermore, the positioning of companies can be perceived as subjective as it is based on external assumptions. However, the Danish audio branding company, Sonic Branding has been beneficial in terms of positioning companies, which provides the framework with added credibility as the company must be perceived as having expertise within this area.

5.1 Criteria for Evaluating the Strength of Brand Identity

Strength of brand identity, which is measured on the horizontal axis, refers to the level an organisation has achieved to incorporate strategic direction, purpose and meaning for the brand. Hence, a strong brand identity succeeds in conveying what the brand stands for as well as implying a promise to the consumer⁶⁶. A weak brand identity on the other hand fails to express the direction and the meaning of a specific brand. It can be rather difficult to determine how well a company has succeeded in conveying its brand identity, as it becomes an external perspective and relates to the brand image. Nevertheless, the level of brand identity is an internal perspective that focuses on how the company strategically communicates its values, directions and purpose of the brand to its stakeholders. As a brand identity is unique for all companies this as such cannot be measured. However, the framework measures how well the brand identity is communicated internally as well as externally. This is determined through the following criteria:

1. *Consistency*: This relates to which extent the brand identity is communicated in a consistent and coherent manner in order for internal as well as external stakeholders to understand the core of the brand.
2. *Distinctiveness*: A brand identity is unique and represents the essence of the brand. In order for consumers to remember the brand it is vital that the brand identity is distinct and memorable.
3. *Level of touch points*: As well as a company needs to incorporate a strategic direction and purpose internally; equally important is it to communicate it externally. The company can communicate its identity in the touch points it shares with the consumers. The more touch points, the more probability of success.
3. *Repetition*: A brand identity needs to be communicated continuously otherwise consumers will not remember it. Today companies that are successful at this are also the ones with the strongest brand identity in the minds of the consumers.

Companies that fulfil these criteria are argued to have a strong brand identity and vice versa the companies that fail to fulfil these criteria have a weak brand identity. These criteria function as a justifier for the positioning of the different companies within the scenario.

5.2. Criteria for Evaluating the Level of Audio Branding

The vertical axis illustrates the level of audio branding being incorporated to the strategic branding processes of organisations. The estimate for placing organisations differently on the scale is dependent on the level of touch points, in which the company has incorporated sound. However, it can be rather difficult to distinguish

⁶⁶ Aaker, David A. (1996), *op.cit*

between high and low in this context, hence, in order to make a division between them several criteria have to be covered. As touched upon in the section about Audio Branding, Jackson argues that in order for audio branding to be successful, it is necessary to follow four guidelines or lessons. In addition to these guidelines, there have been incorporated the issue of touch points for the framework. This is important, as companies have an increased possibility of reaching consumers and increase awareness through developing an audio branding strategy into the different touch points.

1. *Consistency*: In order for a company to demonstrate a high audio focus, the company has to have a consistent message in its outwards communication. In terms of audio branding the company needs to have integrated sound which is used consistently in relation to the marketing communications. In order to be memorable audio branding has to have been heard over a long period of time.
2. *Level of Touch Points*: A well organised audio strategy involves integrating audio elements in all the touch points in which a company is in interaction with the consumer. The higher level of audio branding incorporated to the touch points, the higher the chance of success.
3. *Repetition*: It is not enough merely to be consistent in the marketing communications area; consumers also have to be continuously reminded about the brand. From this one can say that repetition is crucial in terms of creating brand awareness.
4. *Distinctiveness*: Companies need to create a sound, which is relevant, distinct and matches the current brand identity. Consumers need to remember the sound but still connect it to the brand.
5. *Mention the Brand Name*: It is crucial that the brand name is somehow integrated into the audio branding elements. Intel for example, has an immensely high audio logo recognition, however many consumers fail to remember the company behind it.

If an organisation succeeds in covering all aspects, it would be possible to place them in the upper section of the framework. Conversely, organisations that do not comply with these criteria, reflects organisations that have failed to do so, either because they do not consider audio branding as a strategic tool or may not have the necessary resources to incorporate such a strategy. Moreover, as audio branding is a relatively new phenomenon; most companies today would be placed in the lower section of the framework with a low focus on audio branding, mainly because they have not realised the potential of audio branding. This does not imply that companies currently do not use sound in i.e. their advertising and communication with consumers, but rather that the sound used is more randomly chosen than a strategic choice.

As confirmed by Sonic Branding, when audio branding companies are identifying prospective clients, companies that are positioned in the bottom section would be regarded as the ones most eligible for

benefiting from audio⁶⁷. The reason being is that this section represents the companies which can directly benefit from the use of audio branding. By focusing on brand identity as the key element for incorporating sound, audio branding companies can create relevant sound that enhances the brand identity and thus move towards an Integrated Audio Focus in the API Framework.

The upper section of the framework illustrates organisations which have adopted an audio strategy. Audio branding is not about choosing a specific kind of music to define an entire brand. Instead, it focuses on the totality of a company's sounds in order to create a holistic approach that ensures that the brand is perceived as the company intends it to be⁶⁸.

The two upper cells differ in the aspect of aligning the audio strategy to the brand identity of the organisation. If these are not aligned, there is a risk that consumers will experience the audio elements as irrelevant and hence cause confusion about the identity of the brand. A market research conducted by Cheskin Research showed that poorly designed audio branding strategies which did not convey the same message as the visual identity could in fact have a negative effect on the perception of the brand⁶⁹. Furthermore, studies made by SonicBrand⁷⁰ showed "that ads with music that "fits" the brand are 80% more likely for the brand itself to be recalled than those with "non-fit" music"⁷¹. Thus, there is a clear correlation between choosing the "right" sound for the organisation and connecting this to the brand identity.

Below, one can find the four different scenarios which are described in detail including examples from organisations that deal differently with audio branding. However, from an organisational point of view, the ideal scenario would be an Integrated Audio Focus in which sound is created and incorporated to match and enhance the visual brand identity. Hence, audio branding elements should intrinsically be linked to the corporate brand identity in order to convey a coherent brand identity. However, as mentioned previously, the majority of organisations today are to be located at the lower scenarios representing a low focus on audio branding.

5.3 The API Framework's 4 Types of Strategy

1. *Minimum Brand Focus*: Organisations in this scenario make little use of marketing efforts in order to communicate a brand identity to the target audiences. Thus, the brand identity remains rather unknown to the target audience as the organisation fails to distinguish the organisation from others⁷².

The focus on audio branding is also relatively low, as the organisation either do not consider branding issues or do not have the necessary resources to make use of it. Companies that fall into this cell are often minor companies that do not have the necessary resources to build a strong identity via marketing efforts.

⁶⁷ Interview with Sonic Branding, d. 2007-12-05. See appendix 1

⁶⁸ Building brand value through sound [2007] <http://www.aiga.org/content.cfm/gain/content.cfm/building-brand-value-through-sound>

⁶⁹ Anonymous (2001) Audio Branding. *Credit Union Management*, March

⁷⁰ Sonic brand [2007] <http://www.sonicbrand.com>. Retrieved 2007-12-11

⁷¹ Anonymous (2005) How to resonate with consumers, *Brand Strategy*, 4 feb.

⁷² Balmer, J & Greyser, S. (2003) *Revealing the corporation*. New York: Routledge.

Furthermore, the strategic use of sound as a marketing element is not considered to be of importance, as most companies still are not aware of the potential.

The chosen example for this is Ford in Europe. Ford as a car manufacturer which has a long history and is a well recognised car brand. However, Ford has experienced a decrease in sales and in their brand value. Consumers have trouble identifying what the brand actually stands for and what it symbolises to drive a Ford vehicle⁷³. Hence, Ford is placed in this category to demonstrate a well known company, which have weakened its brand identity and is now suffering from this. Furthermore, Ford does not make use of audio branding, which is another reason to this placement in the framework. However, there are possibilities for Ford, as current focus is on creating high quality sound speakers within the Ford vehicles in order to minimise road, engine and exhaust noises and hence create a more pleasant drive⁷⁴.

2. *Brand Identity Focus*: Organisations in this scenario are well aware of the benefits of conveying a strong brand image to the public. They have managed to create a strong image by successfully communicating direction, purpose and meaning of the brand. However, the focus on audio branding is low and the organisations place primary focus on the visual identity of the organisation. There is an opportunity to further enhance the brand identity by utilising audio branding elements, but the company has not yet made efforts to do so. The company is likely to use sound in their advertising, but often the sound is chosen by an advertising agency and reflects the latest trend within popular music⁷⁵. Music can also often be found on the customer service phone lines; however this is usually a place where companies forget that this is where they are in direct contact with the customer. To give an example; a company which has a young and trendy identity should consider which kind of music to play on its customer service phone lines in order to convey a coherent identity. It would make no sense to play classical music when consumers expect something else. In reality, most companies do not consider such issues.

IKEA would be an example of a company placed in this scenario. IKEA has a very strong brand identity and is successful at communicating its values and direction to its customers. The brand does not, however, place any focus on audio branding. Another example could be Volvo, the Swedish car manufacturer. This example is yet quite different than IKEA as it has a considerable focus on incorporating sound into the actual products and the company is doing extensive research to enhance the driver experience⁷⁶. Volvo is placed in the lower section, because it does not have an integrated audio identity, which is clear to the consumers. Hence, there is immense potential for Volvo to incorporate an audio identity.

3. *Audio Focus*: This scenario represents organisations that have implemented a strong audio identity with use of different elements such as audio logo, product sound, web site elements, customer service phone lines and

⁷³ *Boston.com* [2007] http://www.boston.com/business/technology/articles/2006/09/07/a_bold_step_to_fix_fords_image/. Retrieved 2007-12-09

⁷⁴ *Inner auto* [2007] http://www.innerauto.com/Ford_Parts/Ford_Sound_Deadener/. Retrieved 2007-12-09

⁷⁵ Interview with Sonic Branding 2007-12-05, See appendix 1

⁷⁶ *Volvo Cars* [2007] <http://www.volvocars.dk/footer/about/NewsEvents/News/newsDK.htm?item={E7C5FD6B-44F8-467E-810D-D387F13E6925}>. Retrieved 2007-12-09

the like. The brand identity is however rather weak. This is caused by a weak linkage between the audio branding elements and other branding efforts. Hence, the organisation fails to convey a coherent or relevant brand image. If audio branding is not connected to the identity of the brand, there is a risk that consumers might perceive the audio elements as disturbing and consequently make no connection to the brand or worse create a negative association with the brand.

An example of such a company would be Intel. Intel has a well recognised Intel Inside five-note audio logo which is being used consistently throughout advertisements. Actually, SonicBrand⁷⁷ conducted a survey where 90 % of the respondents recognised the Intel audio logo⁷⁸. Thus, Intel has managed to create awareness, and it has been consistent and distinct for a long period of time. However, the reason to why it is placed in this category is that most consumers fail to actually connect this sound to the Intel brand. The same survey conducted by SonicBrand illustrated that consumers remembered the Intel sound logo and the product category, but made no direct associations to the brand and only 38% were able to remember the name behind the sound⁷⁹. One of the reasons explaining this could be linked to the criteria of mentioning the brand name that is behind the sound. Intel does not mention its name in the audio logo. Moreover, the strategic choice of co-advertising with different computer companies is a wise choice in terms of brand awareness. However, it does have the effect that the identity of Intel becomes rather unclear as it becomes connected to other computer companies.

4. *Integrated Audio Focus*: The Integrated Audio Focus would be considered to be the most ideal scenario for an organisation. By incorporating audio branding to the identity of the brand, not only helps the organisation to support its identity, it also aids in the establishment of a coherent identity. The strategic use of sound can be used as a tool to enhance the visual identity and hence create a coherent identity. Not many companies are placed in this category yet, but there are some major international companies that have succeeded in doing this.

In 2003 McDonalds launched the world's first global audio branding campaign named "I'm lovin' it". The strategy was chosen in order to communicate one single brand message to all the markets. The theme was incorporated into all McDonalds brand communication initiatives and the results have been remarkable. The "I'm lovin' it theme" is one of the top 10 audio brands due to heavy media use and consistency⁸⁰. The reason for the success is the consistency of the audio logo, the level of repetition and the distinctiveness of the audio elements which makes a connection to the values of McDonalds. "I'm lovin' it" reflects an identity which is perceived as fun and outgoing, which is the identity McDonalds wish to communicate.

Coca-Cola is another company which has strategically used sound in advertising for many years. In 1993 they introduced the "Always Coca-Cola" campaign which included 27 different commercials designed to

⁷⁷ Sonicbrand [2007] <http://www.sonicbrand.com>. Retrieved 2007-12-10

⁷⁸ Anonymous (2006) RESEARCH AUDIO BRANDING: orchestrating a sound strategy, *Brand Strategy*, pp. 38

⁷⁹ *Ibid*

⁸⁰ *Brand Strategy* [2007] http://www.brandstrategy.co.uk/issues/2006/February/Orchestrating_a_sound_strategy/Browse.view. Retrieved 2007-12-09

appeal to specific audiences. Consistent choice of music was used throughout the advertising and the audio logo: “Always Coca-Cola” was incorporated to all advertising material⁸¹. Another example is the Coca-Cola Christmas commercials which use the same song every year. In addition, Coca-Cola often uses the product sound itself in their advertising which contributes to the consumer experience when buying the product. Thus, Coca-Cola has consistently managed to incorporate audio elements into several touch points providing them with a high level of audio branding.

The API Framework (figure 7) is used as an identifier to position organisations in the different scenarios as well as illustrating where companies should place their focus in order to reach a desired brand identity by the aid of audio branding as a strategic tool. The following chapter will elaborate on the use of the framework.

⁸¹ Coca Cola [2007] http://www.thecoca-colacompany.com/heritage/pdf/cokelore/Heritage_CokeLore_polarbears.pdf Retrieved 2007-12-08

6. Usage of the API Framework

Audio branding should not be applied for the purpose of creating a brand identity but rather as a tool to enhance an existing brand identity. In order for the API Framework to be useful for more than positioning companies, it is necessary to examine how companies can advance within the framework and integrate audio branding into their cent brand strategy. Thus, as a continuation of the aforementioned API Framework, the following recommendations are given for brands which find themselves in one of the four areas within the framework. The illustration below (fig. 8) exemplifies in which directions companies ideally should move to according to their cent positioning.

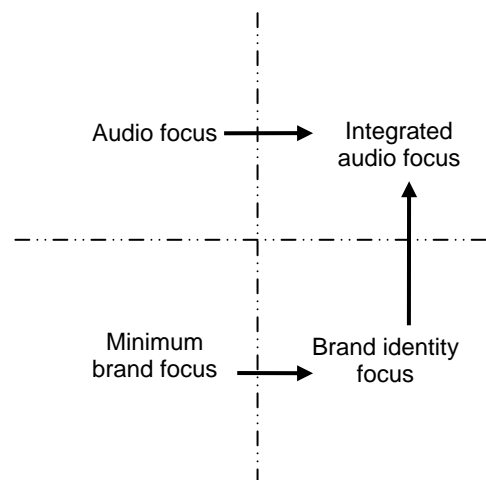


Fig. 8: Recommended shifts for brands within the audio branding framework

1. *Minimum Brand Focus*: Organizations within this area lack a distinctive brand identity. Before applying audio branding, these brands should first focus on the creation of the brand identity itself and attempt to shift towards the area of “brand identity focus” within the framework. Once this is achieved, brands can take measures to portray their identity through audio.
2. *Brand Identity Focus*: Brands in this area are well aware of their identity and know what their brand stands for. Having achieved the level of brand identity focus but lacking a sound, these brands can benefit the most from audio branding. To shift towards the area of Integrated Audio Focus, brands are recommended to use Kapferer’s Brand Identity Prism and relate the output to the proposed Audio identity triangle which was introduced earlier.
3. *Audio Focus*: Brands within this area have identified the potential of audio branding but have used it ineffectively as the brand identity itself has proven to be weak. This results in consumers recognising the

sound, but not being able to link the sound to a particular brand. Brands with an audio focus should therefore strive towards an integrated audio focus where audio leans on the brand identity and not vice versa.

4. *Integrated Audio Focus*: An area which contains the best of both worlds: a strong brand identity supported by a strong audio focus. Brands that find themselves within this area of the framework get the affirmation that they have a strong audio strategy and are encouraged to continue their current audio branding activities. The duration of these branding activities should however be looked upon with caution as it not known how long the strategy will remain effective.

7. Conclusion

This paper has endeavoured to determine which measures should be taken by brands to incorporate audio into a brand identity. The interview with Sonic Branding confirmed that the utility of audio is profoundly connected to the brand identity. A common means of utilising audio branding is by creating *sound logos*, which are audio constituent equivalent to the visual logo. Furthermore, the paper elaborates on the different sound elements that audio branding strategies can include by examining various touch points as well as introducing the brand identity triangle.

The constituents of brand identities were examined by referring to the brand identity prism. Subsequently, the means of transforming the existing brand identity into sound elements were elaborated through the creation of the audio identity triangle. The focal point for applying audio to the brand was to discover the core of the current brand identity and mirror it in the audio strategy. Moreover, the core constituents should be incorporated throughout the various touch points in order to increase brand awareness and reinforce the existing identity through audio elements. By creating a sound profile the brand has a firm strategy, which serves to ensure that the audio that is to be used corresponds to the core identity. Consistency proved to be an important element when adding sound elements to the brand, in the same respect as it is with visuals. However, brands can employ various extended audio identities, in order to stay tuned to external expectations and trends.

The API Framework was developed with the purpose of offering a manageable and clear illustration of how brands can identify their current position within audio branding and concurrently discover which elements of the brand should be reinforced in order to advance towards an integrated audio focus. From a theoretical perspective, the framework builds a bridge between brand identity and audio branding. Moreover, the usefulness of the framework is further emphasised in the recommendations made for companies positioned in different scenarios. These recommendations contribute to the decision-making process of selecting a suitable strategy to enhance the company's positioning. It should be noted that the suggested brand identity triangle model and the API Framework are strictly suggestive and do not imply that brands cannot incorporate audio into their brand identity otherwise.

The overall contribution of the report lies within the connection of brand identity and audio branding. Based on the empirical data it can be concluded that, before being able to incorporate an audio branding strategy to an existing brand strategy it is vital that the company has a strong and clear brand identity. This can be determined by looking at the brand identity prism. Since audio branding should be used to enhance a brand identity rather than to create an identity on itself, brands can use the criteria in the proposed conceptual API Framework to determine the current strength of its identity. Furthermore, companies can via the API Framework position themselves according to aforementioned factors and thus become aware of the aspects necessary to focus on in order to move towards an Integrated Audio Focus. This is suggested to be the ideal scenario, as companies in this position have succeeded in conveying a strong brand identity as well as having realised the potential of enhancing the brand by adopting a strategic approach to sound.

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9. Appendices

Appendix 1

Summary of interview with Jeanette Løbner &

Karsten Kjems from Sonic Branding

Dec. 5, 2007. Vanløse, Denmark.



Sonic Branding is a Danish communications agency with special focus on audio branding as well as creating audio profiles for companies. It was established in 2004 by director Karsten Kjems, and has collaborated with brands such as DSB (De Danske statsbaner) , Codan, Cision, Danske Bank, SAS and Dantherm Air-Handling.

On the 5th of December 2007 an interview with Jeanette Løbner, head of contact, and Karsten Kjems, director of Sonic Branding, was conducted with the purpose of gaining an increased insight to the world of audio branding. The interview took place as an interactive session with the following questions as guidelines:

- How has the integration of audio for brands developed recently? What is currently in focus?
- In general, do companies show interest in audio branding, or is it still a completely new concept to them?
- Which kind of company are you mainly contacted by? (E.g. retail, internet based, FMCG etc.)
 - Is there generally an interest in integrating audio to several touch points?
 - Which sound element is mostly of interest by companies? (E.g. audio logo's, products, Internet, commercials etc.)
- Do you continuously develop and adjust the audio strategy for the company?
- When you are creating audio for a company/brand, which considerations do you generally have in order to find a sound that reflects the company/brand (e.g. values, identity etc.)
- How is the process of developing audio (strategy)
- Are there any specific requirements that the audio should meet in order to connect it to a company?
- What do you envisage as future developments/trends within audio branding?
 - Can over exposure to sound be a possible threat to the brand as we observe is happening to visual advertising today?

The people present were: Jeanette Løbner, Karsten Kjems, Matilde Ejlertsen (author) and Majken Steenfath (author).

The mission of Sonic Branding

The mission of Sonic Branding is to create musical values that match the mission, vision and values of companies. The company is both consultative as well as producing within audio branding. The sound elements are produced by their assigned sound technicians, thus there is no use of famous songs to create awareness. Mainly because it is quite expensive to buy the copyrights for certain songs, but also because that sounds should represent the company and not someone else.

The market for audio branding is increasing, as companies are starting to realise the importance of incorporating sound to their brands. The Danish market, however, is still immature for audio branding. Hence, there is a need for spreading the concept. Sonicbranding state one of their primary goals to increase the awareness of audio branding and its relevance in relation to brand value.

Seeing that the Danish market for incorporating audio into the brand identity can be considered as immature, one of the main objectives for Sonicbranding is to establish contacts with companies that can benefit from utilising audio elements. Hence, fieldwork is a large part of the daily routines. It is demanding, as many companies have not yet considered audio branding and in larger, international organisations there is confusion about who is responsible for making such decisions.

Another threat of audio branding is that advertising agencies consider audio branding agencies to be competitors. However, Sonic Branding does not perceive themselves as competitors, as they do not focus on visual parts.

Methods and tools

Sonic Branding believes that sound should be used strategically to create value for the company. It has to be consistent with the core values of the company. Furthermore, it has to be credible and coherent in the various touch points, otherwise people will mistrust the company and it risks losing its reliability. As an example Codan, a Danish insurance company, was used. Codan has created a new audio identity, which should reflect a masculine and modern company. However, when calling them on their service phone lines, they reflected something entirely different. This needs to be in coherence in order to convey a credible image. Now Sonic Branding functions as a strategic audio advisor for Codan to ensure that the sound being used is coherent with the identity.

Sonic Branding has created a "sound-wheel" in order to reflect how customers can use audio branding and integrate this into the touch points. The wheel represents the core, which is the audio logo and the outer parts consist of different touch points the company can use to integrate sound. The sound-wheel is used to illustrate in which touch points the company uses audio branding and to recommend how the company can

expand into more touch points. Jeanette Løbner does emphasise that the extension sound into touch points, should match the reality and identity of the company. Thus, it would make little sense to focus on e.g. podcasting if the company identity is traditional and conservative. Instead, audio branding should reflect the communication strategy of the company.

The process of creating an audio identity is an extensive process. Sonic Branding has developed a strategic approach to the process which involves pre-analysis, workshop, development of the audio strategy and finally recommendations for an audio branding strategy.

The pre-analysis part involves defining the company's identity and values in order to be able to create a matching audio identity.

The pre-analysis involves looking at:

- How do the competitors sound?
- What are the expectations for the audio branding strategy?
- What are the company's identity, reputation, mission and vision?
- Jung's archetypes
- Personality profile: Is the brand a man or a woman?
- Use of media and communications strategy

After having discussed these issues in order to get to the core of the brand identity, Sonic Branding gives recommendations as well as creating an action plan for the process.

Sonic Branding also makes use of a 4 hour long workshop where they, together with the company in question, make different exercises in order to position the company and find out which values they want to signal to the consumers. Based on this workshop, Sonic Branding makes a profile, which illustrates where the company is positioned, and which steps the company should take to move in the right direction.

If the company agrees to take the audio branding process further, Sonic Branding will develop an audio-manual for the company which can adapted to various situations and touch points. Karsten Kjems refers to the Blue Ocean Strategy and believes that companies should use audio branding as a way to distinguish themselves from others.

Can the audio identity be changed over time?

Sonic Branding believes that it is important to be consistent in the use of audio branding. However, companies also need to be aware that the sound is updated and relevant. Just as well as trends change, sound also changes. The core of the audio strategy should remain the same, but it should be flexible enough to be varied according to changing trends or positioning of the company. Moreover, if the company changes its

values, the audio branding strategy has to be changed accordingly as well as companies would change their visual identity.

Positioning through the use of sound

Sonic Branding presents a framework for positioning within audio branding. Companies need to consider how the audio strategy should be perceived. The framework focuses on modern vs. traditional and attention-seeking vs. accepting. The company needs to decide where they wish to position themselves in coherence with the current values of the brand.

The market today

According to Sonic Branding (quoting another source) consumers are susceptible to different emotional appeals. 40 % are said to react stronger to visual appeals, another 40% to auditive appeals and finally 20% to kinetic appeals. Inevitably, this creates a major opportunity for companies to expand into a market that is predominated by visual appeals – through the use of sound.

As it is today many companies use sound in their advertising, but many do not use it strategically. Thus, Sonic Branding puts much effort into creating awareness about audio branding and tries to establish many contacts with larger companies that have the potential of benefiting from audio branding. They perceive the Danish market yet to be immature in relation to audio branding, as the market is very traditional. It is about looking at the competitors and see what they are doing and trying to do the same.

Jeanette Løbner believes that the companies that do use audio branding should be better at communicating it, as it would create a bigger effect as well as enhancing the awareness of audio branding.

By showing the conceptual framework for audio branding strategies to Sonic Branding, they could identify their potential customers in the Brand Identity Focus. Hence, potential customers for Sonic Branding would be companies which have a strong identity but have not yet incorporated an audio branding strategy. They mention Lego as a potential customer.

Future

Sonic Branding believes that companies will still rely on their visual identity. However, they are of the opinion that audio branding will experience an increased importance in marketing strategies today due to that the visual market is saturated. If companies need to differentiate themselves, they have to incorporate an extra sense. They refer to Martin Lindstrøm, which also argues that senses are important when it comes to enhancing the value of the brand.

The ultimate dream for Karsten Kjems would be to develop a sound, which consumers make their own remixes from. Hence, creating a form of viral marketing from sound which would increase the awareness. Another way to involve consumers would be to make a contest where consumers were given some pre-fabricated sounds from which they could create their own remix.

Concluding, Karsten Kjems states: *"Branding is like a mosaic, which involves monuments that are fragmented. The more impressions you make the more imprints you will make on the receiver"*.

Appendix 2

Translation of Sonic Branding's sales manual from Danish to English (Sound profile)

From the Sonic Branding sales manual page 8:

- En lydprofil er et strategisk værktøj, der giver overblik, klarhed og danner grundlag for den måde, som virksomheden anvender lyd på
- Lydprofilen indgår som taktisk værktøj i markedsføringsstrategien

Primære målsætninger med en lydprofil er at:

- Give et værktøj til at tænke lyd strategisk ind i markedsføringen.
 - Sikre den bedste overensstemmelse mellem brandstrategi, omdømme og anvendelse af lyd
 - Skabe synergi i anvendelsen af lyd på tværs af kommunikationskanaler
 - Optimere kommunikationen med interessenter – internt som eksternt
 - Give virksomheden et konkret udgangspunkt for at få udarbejdet el lydidentitet.
-

English translation:

- A sound profile is a strategic tool, which gives an overview, clarity and creates a basis for the way companies utilise sound.
- The sound profile is incorporated as a tactical tool in the marketing strategy.

Primary goals for a sound profile are to:

- Provide a tool to incorporate sound strategically into the marketing strategy
- Ensure agreement between brand strategy, reputation and usage of sound
- Create synergy in the usage of sound across communication channels
- Optimise communication with partners – internally as well as externally
- Provide the company with a concrete standpoint in order to develop/create a sound identity.

Appendix 3

Translation of Sonic Branding's sales manual from Danish to English (Sound logo)

From the Sonic Branding sales manual page 9:

Lydlogo

- et lydlogo er en bestemt lyd eller melodistump, der forbindes til virksomhedens logo for at øge genkendeligheden hos modtagerne
- et lydlogo fungerer som en effektiv identitetsskabende signatur

Primære målsætninger med et lydlogo er at:

- forstærke virksomhedens lydmæssige identitet
 - skabe hurtig genkendelighed hos modtageren
 - få en musikalsk byggekloks, der kan anvendes bredt og fleksibelt i markedsføringen
-

English translation:

Sound logo

- a sound logo is a certain sound or melodi "clip" wich is connected to the company logo in order to enhance the recognition by the recipients.
- A sound logo works as an effective identity creating signature

Primary goals for a sound logo:

- Reinforce the company's audio identity
- Create quick/immediate recognition by the recipient
- Make "music building blocks" that can be used widely and flexibly in the marketing.