AUDIO BRANDING

BRANDS, SOUND AND COMMUNICATION

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Verlag Reinhard Fischer

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Preface

The volume at hand is based on the German publication of *Audio Branding – Entwicklung, Anwendung akustistischer Identitäten in Werbung, Medien und Gesellschaft* from 2007.

Some articles have been revised, updated and taken over, others are new additions. The selection and combination of the articles is geared towards presenting the topic of acoustic brand management as extensively as possible, in order to provide an extensive overview. Therefore the book is not only suited as an introduction to the topic, but also serves experts as a fundament and reference book.

The book is divided into thematic chapters. The prelude consists of an article that offers an overview of the current level of teachings and development in the area of acoustic communication and an exemplary draft of the Sound Studies degree course offered at the Berlin University of Arts, which also covers Audio Branding as an area of expertise in Acoustic Communication.

The first article of the following chapter B uses examples to describe the importance and function of acoustic signals in every day life, and to what effect sound is used in the media. The second article of the chapter demonstrates the ideas of Branding and brand identity and how a brand can be communicated acoustically by means of Audio Branding.

Chapter C shows how two pioneers from both sides of the Atlantic experienced and participated in the development of Audio Branding.

In chapter D the authors address the basic principles, elements, procedures and methods of Audio Branding. Chapter D also describes the meaning and role of Audio Branding in the modern, digital world of media as well as the possibilities that arise with the new constellation of brands, music industry and music artists.

Acoustic brand signals are essential in multi-sensory brand communication. Chapter E therefore describes the basic principles of multi-sensory brand communication and also displays the contribution made by Audio Branding. Furthermore the chapter illustrates the basis upon and the methods with which consistent and meaningful multi-sensory design is created.

Chapter F deals with the legal aspects of Audio Branding: What legal bases need to be considered and how is the registration of a sound mark implemented?

Chapter G, the last chapter, delivers insight into the practical realisation of different Audio Branding projects, as can be seen in international case studies: What challenges and problems need to be negotiated? And, what kind of possibilities and opportunities are available?

To ensure overall better comprehension, the glossary offers explanations of important terms in the area of Audio Branding, as well as relevant definitions in the areas of musicology, acoustics and branding.

Sound samples belonging to some of the articles and further information about the publication can be found on the website www.audio-branding.info.

We hope this book is a help to those involved in Audio Branding, be it in schooling or as an occupation. The number of academic papers on this topic is increasing and correspondence and the discussion of Audio Branding is growing in international forums and blogs. We would like this publication to further the desire for exchange of ideas and discussions, and lead to more coalescence in the steadily growing Audio Branding community.

We would like to thank those people, without whose interest, dedication and patience this book never would have existed: a big "Thank You" to all authors. We are also very grateful to our publisher Reinhard Fischer for the enjoyable cooperation. We would also like to thank Thom Padlo, Benjamin Troll, Micha Hoppe and Markus Reiner for their support of this project. And last but not least, we are deeply grateful to all those who inspired and motivated us, supplied us with information, encouraged us, proof-read and translated or assisted us in any way and thus contributed to the success of this book project.

The editors Kai Bronner and Rainer Hirt

"If you have nothing to say, sing it."

(David Ogilvy)

From Brand Identity to Audio Branding

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"A product without clear and strong branding, is like a set of tones without a melody."
Angela Nelissen (2006, p. 285)

Companies form brands and brands form companies. They capture the identity of a company (or a strategic business unit) and its offerings. If elaborated well, "a brand can transform the way people see the world. It can change perceptions, preferences, and priorities" (Adamson, 2006, p. 219). To reach this level of brand sophistication, a clear brand identity – with a strong linkage to the business strategy – is key. The brand identity is then specified by means of corresponding brand elements, which in turn are combined to actively communicated brand signals, leading to preference and loyalty-inducing experiences with a brand.

1. Brand Identity as Starting Point

A brand identity typically consists of a key word or a short sequence of words that form the basis for the name selection (if still possible) and/or the brand claim. This so-called brand idea is then further specified by two to four brand values. The brand identity of *BMW* illustrates this approach (see figure 1 for details).

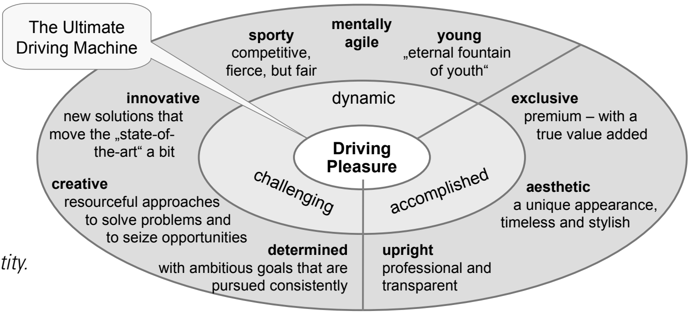

The Ultimate Driving Machine
sporty
competitive, fierce, but fair
mentally agile
young
„eternal fountain of youth“
innovative
new solutions that move the „state-of-the-art“ a bit
dynamic
exclusive
premium – with a true value added
Driving Pleasure
challenging
accomplished
creative
resourceful approaches to solve problems and to seize opportunities
aesthetic
a unique appearance, timeless and stylish
determined
with ambitious goals that are pursued consistently
upright
professional and transparent

Figure 1.
BMW Brand Identity.

BMW is built around the brand idea of "Driving Pleasure". This idea of "pleasure", which every BMW model is an example of, is clearly expressed in the brand claim "The Ultimate Driving Machine". Interestingly, the original German claim "Freude am Fahren" (Joy of Driving) gets even closer to the original brand idea, whereas the English claim stresses more the source of this pleasure, the engine of the car. However, BMW does not just offer another engine in the market but the "ultimate" one. It turns the car into a "driving machine". The brand core "driving pleasure" is then further substantiated with the brand values "accomplished", "challenging", and "dynamic".

Taken together, the brand identity of BMW sets the brand clearly apart from its competitors, which is one of the four main requirements for a strong brand identity: differentiation. Ideally, all "points of difference" (Keller, 2008, p. 107f.) are managed across all five senses (see article *Acoustics as Resonant Element of Multi-sensory Brand Communication*). For one, the sensory brand messages should be in tune with each other, and even more important, in line with the brand. Only then can a brand create momentum in the market. Second, the identity of the brand should be of relevance to the customers. It should provide connectivity. Driving pleasure is surely linking customers with the brand BMW. In general, successful brands – often reaching iconic status – are mostly established by what Holt refers to as "Cultural Branding". According to *Holt* "successful makes like BMW combine a conventional focus on benefits and quality reputation with cultural branding" (2004, p. 5). Strong iconic brands are oftentimes built around the following seven axioms (Holt, 2004, p. 6ff.):
– Address acute contradictions in society
– Perform a simple story that address these desires and anxieties
– Make these stories reside in the brand, which customers experience and share via ritual action
– Set these stories in populist worlds
– Perform as activists, leading culture
– Rely on breakthrough performances, rather than consistent communications
– Cast a halo effect on other aspects of the brand

When replacing "society" and "culture" with "the industry", it becomes obvious that these axioms can also be applied to B2B markets. In addition to differentiation and relevance, successful brand identities should also be memorable. Their identity should consist of a simple, unexpected, concrete, credible, emotional and – according to the author – (multi-) sensory story, summarized by the acronym SUCCESS (Heath/Heath, 2007). Last but not least, a strong brand identity should provide sustainability with respect to the different experiential touch points and over time. The brand message should be the same no matter where and when a customer interacts with the brand. It should also be maintained over time. Slight adjustments are okay as long as self-similarity is maintained. In this case, the brand identity, also referred to as brand DNA or genetic code, stays intact and with it the value of the brand.

While brand identity is what a company has in mind when thinking of the brand and what it wants customers and other stakeholders to have in mind when thinking of the brand, brand image refers to the customers actual associations linked with a brand. Internally, brand identity knowledge functions as a strong safeguard of the long-term brand strategy. If something is off-brand, it should be clear to everyone within the company, that this should not be pursued any further. Take for example the current trend for energy-saving modes of driving. BMW has addressed this in accordance with its brand values "challenging" and "dynamic" with the 2008/2009 campaign "EfficientDynamics – Less emissions. More driving pleasure" (Kilian, 2008a, p. 1).

2. Brand Elements as Conceptual Units

Once the brand identity has been defined, appropriate brand elements need to be selected in order to help communicate the brand identity. Typically, brand elements are simple conceptual units that mainly make use of one or two sensory channels. Shapes for example can be felt and seen while tones can only be heard and colors only be seen.

In general, brand elements can be divided into primary and secondary elements. While primary brand elements are directly connected to the brand identity and serve to identify and differentiate a brand, secondary brand elements are typically linked to other entities with a knowledge structure of their own in the minds of customers. Thereby, the brand indirectly "borrows" some of this knowledge and leverages these secondary associations to enrich its own brand identity (Keller, 2008, p. 180ff.). Figure 2 provides an overview of the most-commonly used primary and secondary brand elements. In the following two sub-chapters, only brand elements with a clear linkage to acoustics are being discussed in detail. Audible brand elements (written in boldface in figure 2 below) will be discussed subsequently.

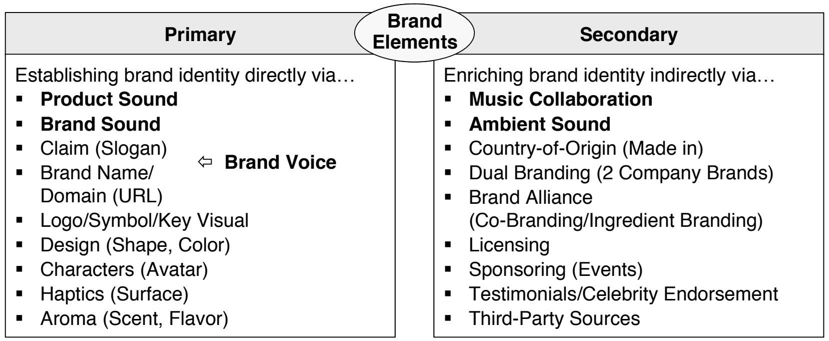


Figure 2. Primary and Secondary Brand Elements.

2.1 Primary Brand Elements

Primary brand elements help establish and sustain the brand identity in the market. The most important primary brand element is the brand name. The name of a company, product, or service takes the role of a mental linkage of all other brand elements in the minds of customers. It is the centrepiece of any brand identity. Therefore, the brand name and its counterpart, the brand claim, both ideally carry the brand identity within themselves. In cases, where the brand name is already in existence or for some reason does not directly relate to the brand identity, this role has to be mainly fulfilled by the claim.

Claims typically consist of short phrases that are being used to communicate the brand identity in a descriptive and/or emotional manner. When set to music, the effectiveness of claims is enhanced. Similarly, intonation, rhythm, and rhyme pattern also strengthen the potency of these short advertising phrases. Furthermore, figures of speech are frequently being utilized to achieve a special effect that augments the level of attention and memory. Alliterations are one typical rhetorical device being used in this context. They designate a repetition of an initial consonant sound, e.g. as in "Don't dream it. Drive it" (*Jaguar*), "Britain's best business bank" (*Allied Irish Bank*), or "The passionate pursuit of perfection" (*Lexus*). Alliterations can also be used with brand names, e.g. *Coca-Cola, Dirt Devil,* and *Magic Markers*.

Taking this a step further, the acoustic pattern of a name itself can carry brand meaning beyond its semantic denotation. A carefully selected brand name can, for example, imitate the sounds associated with a product, e.g. its usage. This phonetic device is called Onomatopoeia. The brand name *Crunchies*, for example, bears in its name the "crack-crunch-crisp" sound that one creates (and hears) when eating this particular brand of potato chips. In the same way, the sibilant sound in the middle of the brand name *Bizzl* anticipates the refreshing feeling when drinking this beverage. Similarly, the name *Taft* acoustically imitates the "tffft" sound when using this brand of hairspray. Table 1 provides an overview of the most commonly used phonetic devices in branding (Keller, 2008, p. 152).

Phonetic Device	Definition and Example
Onomatopoeia	use of syllable phonetics to resemble the object itself (Wisk)
Alliteration	consonant repetition (Mister Minit)
Consonance	consonant repetition with intervening vowel changes (Weight Watchers)
Assonance	vowel repetition (Kal Kan)
Masculine rhyme	rhyme with end-of-syllable stress (Max Pax)
Feminine rhyme	unaccented syllable followed by accented syllable (American Airlines)
Weak/imperfect/slant rhyme	vowels differ or consonants are similar, not identical (Black & Decker)
Clipping	product names attenuated (Chevy instead of Chevrolet)
Blending	morphemic combination, usually with elision (Duracell, short for durable cell)
Initial plosives	b, c-hard, d, g-hard, k, p, q, t (Bic)

Table 1. Phonetic Devices for Brand Names.

In addition to initial plosives, as mentioned in the table above, certain vocals can be deployed to acoustically enhance brand meaning. When adequately applied, they influence our conception of size, shape, and intensity of a branded object. While "a", for example, implies a somewhat larger item, the vocal "i" is typically linked to smaller articles. Soft voiced consonants like "l", "m", "n", "v" and "w", in turn, can support feminine, gentle, and harmonious brand identities, as is the case with *Nivea, Wella,* and *Always*. In contrast to this, hard unvoiced consonants like "k", "p" and "t" can express manliness, vitality, and technology. The brands *KitKat, Pattex,* and *Tigra* are typical examples of this. Table 2 lists further examples of phonetic devices (www.teachit.co.uk/attachments/4071.pdf).

Phonetic Device	Definition and Example
Long vowels	long vowel sounds to create a gentle, languid effect, e.g. a c**oo**l w**av**e withdr**ew** down the f**a**ding b**ea**ch
Short vowels	short vowel sounds create a clipped, abrupt effect, e.g. he sm**a**shed his f**i**st down onto the b**o**x
Soft consonants	soft consonant sounds create a mellifluous effect, e.g. the **m**ur**m**uring plea**s**ure of a **l**a**z**y strea**m**
Hard consonants	hard consonant sounds create a harsh effect, e.g. the **f**urious witch **c**a**ck**led and **sp**at

Table 2. Phonetic Devices for Claims.

Even when the name is not providing "acoustical" information itself, a transformation into an acoustic pattern can still make the name "sound good". The brands *Moulinex, Schneekoppe,* and *Yahoo*, for example, were set to music, thereby creating acoustical logos that became complements to the employed visual logos.

Besides, brand names are often closely linked to logos. They can be related to the brand name in one of the following three ways: as icons, indexes, or symbols (Solomon, 2007, p. 72). Icons resemble the product in some way as does, for example, the crane logo of *Lufthansa*. Indexes, in contrast, are connected to the brand because they share some property. The galloping horse of the *Ford Mustang* for example conveys the shared property of extraordinary (horse) power. Symbols, finally, are linked to a brand though conventional or agreed-upon associations. The crocodile, for example, we have been taught, is the logo of *Lacoste*. So far, however, there are only few cases, where brand logos have been linked to sound logos. One is *Deutsche Telekom*. Its logo highlights in an impressive way the visual-acoustic linkages that are possible. As can be seen in figure 3, each one of the five tones of the "di-di-di-dii-di" sound logo of Deutsche Telekom resembles one element of the visual logo. While the four dots are all represented by the same tone, the "T" symbol is matched by a sound that is a third higher (see also article *Synesthetic Design – Building Multi-sensory Arrangements*).

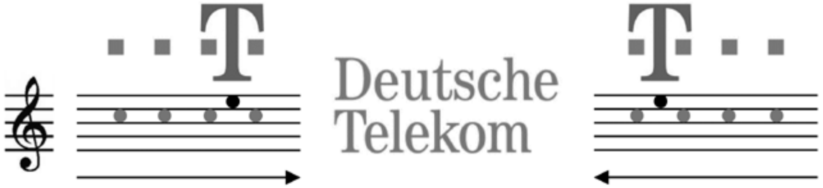


Figure 3. Logo and Acoustics in Tune at Deutsche Telekom.

Both, brand names and logos can also become key visuals. Typically, key visuals help a company communicate the brand identity and the brand positioning derived therefrom. In general, three types of key visuals can be observed:
– Brand names (e.g. the writing of *Coca-Cola*) and logos (e.g. *The Michelin Man*)
– Benefit-based imagery (e.g. *Mr. Clean*)
– Pictorial experience worlds (e.g. *Bacardi* Feeling)

Pictorial experience worlds in particular provide – next to their function as identification platforms – a visual environment with which emotions can be conveyed. In most cases, mood-matching brand songs are part of these visual experience worlds. At Bacardi, for instance, the visualized attitude to life – the so-called Bacardi Feeling – is connected to rum and boosted with the brand song "Summer Dreamin'". In the same fashion, *Wall's (HB, Langnese, Good Humor* etc. in various countries) has been using the brand song "Like Ice in the Sunshine" for more than 20 years in different versions to accompany their ice-cream experience acoustically.

2.2 Secondary Brand Elements

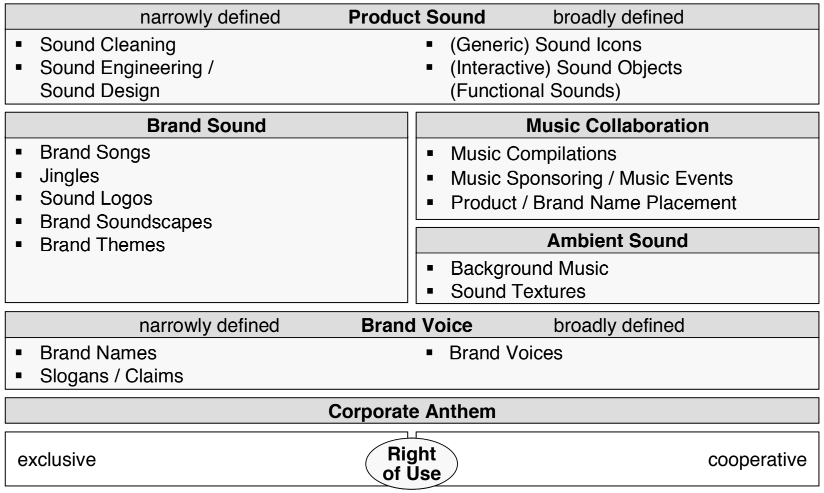
As we have seen, primary brand elements help establish a brand identity directly and, in some instances, make use of acoustics. Secondary brand elements enrich a brand's identity by establishing a link to other objects. Thereby, brand awareness can be increased and the brand image can be augmented or adjusted. One way of doing this is by stressing the country-of-origin of a brand. Acoustically, this can be done, among others, by using stereotypical music of a country, e.g. German "oompah" music (for brass instruments) or by applying a country-specific language abroad. *Volkswagen*, for example, used the German term "Fahrvergnügen" in the US for a while and *Audi*, still to this day, employs the German claim "Vorsprung durch Technik" worldwide (Kilian, 2009, p. 256).

When evaluating primary and secondary brand elements, the following criteria are helpful:
– Memorability (Recall and Recognition)
– Relevance (Associations and their Fit)
– Sympathy (Attractiveness and Aesthetics)
– Transferability (Product Range and Cultures)
– Adaptability (Media and Time elapsed)
– Protectability (Classification and geographic Scope)

While the first three criteria are most relevant for the establishment of a brand, the latter three oftentimes have a more defensive character. They enable a company to leverage already existing brand equity. All six criteria can also be applied when choosing audible brand elements which are discussed below.

3. Audible Brand Elements

In most cases, still, audible brand elements are reduced to jingles. They can be described as extended musical slogans. *Keller* defines jingles as "musical messages written around the brand" (2008, p. 164). If well composed, they contain a catchy hook and chorus that almost guarantees them a permanent place in the minds of listening customers. However, audible branding consists of many more elements today, as this edition indicates. So far, there is not


narrowly defined **Product Sound** broadly defined
- Sound Cleaning
- Sound Engineering / Sound Design
- (Generic) Sound Icons
- (Interactive) Sound Objects (Functional Sounds)

Brand Sound
- Brand Songs
- Jingles
- Sound Logos
- Brand Soundscapes
- Brand Themes

Music Collaboration
- Music Compilations
- Music Sponsoring / Music Events
- Product / Brand Name Placement

Ambient Sound
- Background Music
- Sound Textures

narrowly defined **Brand Voice** broadly defined
- Brand Names
- Slogans / Claims
- Brand Voices

Corporate Anthem

exclusive **Right of Use** cooperative

Figure 4. Typology of Audible Brand Elements.

a standard term for acoustic brand elements. Instead, the following terms are being used, in most cases synonymously: Brand sound, Sound Branding, Corporate Sound, Sonic Branding, Acoustic Branding, Audio Branding, and Sound Mark.

A common trait of all acoustical brand elements is that they affect us emotionally and increase brand recognition, oftentimes beyond our awareness and our field of vision. The undirected aural sense perceives everything around us 360 degrees horizontally, vertically, and even behind barricades. During a typical TV advertisement, for example, 24% of all viewers are in the room, but do not look at the TV set temporarily, e.g. because they are reading or doing something else (Brandmeyer, 2003, p. 62). It is therefore of utmost importance that a brand always reveals its identity acoustically by mentioning its name and/or another audible brand element. Audible brand elements can be categorized, among other methods, with respect to the right of use a company holds regarding the audible brand element (exclusive or cooperative). Figure 4 provides an overview of the most relevant primary and secondary elements as specified above.

Corporate anthems are predominantly used internally (see article *Case Study: NBL Team Anthem, WWF India*). Their main goal is to increase the level of identification an employee has with the company and its brand(s). While corporate anthems are quite common in some Asian countries, they are not (yet) in Europe. As an example, the corporate anthem of *Nihon Break Kogyo* reached the national charts in Japan. In Germany, there are so far only a few corporate anthems in existence. At the hardware store chain *Obi*, for instance, composer and singer *Udo Jürgens* wrote an anthem for the company called "Mehr als nur vier Wände, an die man Bilder hängt" (more than just four walls, on which you hang up pictures). Similarly, the tractor manufacturer *Deutz-Fahr* uses its own anthem as does supermarket chain *Rewe*. The chorus of the Rewe anthem is as follows:

a little better everyday, with the world smiling back at you, better everyday with you

The anthem not only reflects the ambitions of the company, but also incorporates their claim "a little better everyday" (jeden Tag ein bisschen besser). In the same way, *Henkel*, a leading German consumer goods company, has included its claim "A brand like a friend" in the chorus of its corporate anthem "We together".

While corporate anthems are mainly directed towards the company employees, brand voices primarily unfold their properties externally. As we have seen, brand names and claims are not only primary brand elements but also examples of brand voice. They do not only carry semantic meaning, but phonetic connotation as well. Another example shall highlight this aspect once more: The brand names of *Motorola* cell phones. The brand name *RAZR* not only semantically refers to a "razor" whereby it implies its slim design "like a razor", but also acoustically via the harsh sound of the name. Similarly, the *PEBL* refers to a "pebble", not only semantically expressing its soft-shaped design but also acoustically conveying its "feminine" touch and round, "pebble-like" shape. The same holds true for the *SLVR*, another slim-shaped cell phone, just like a "sliver". In a broader sense, brand voice also includes voices of spokesmen that are as closely connected to a particular brand as possible, e.g. by signing long-term contracts that guarantee some exclusivity. In *Ikea* and *Wasa* TV and radio commercials for example, the speakers of the voice-over have a clearly discernible Swedish accent and thereby noticeably support the intended country-of-origin effect (Kilian, 2009, p. 255f.).

In contrast to this, ambient sound rarely establishes a strong product attribute linkage. Ambient sound can consist of rather simple, chantless sound textures like bird or water tones. It can also, and typically does, take the form of so-called background music. *Muzak*, the leading company in this field provides more than two million songs that they have classified and stored in their database. Besides 80 different business music programs, the company creates for its clients "a custom music experience that's exclusive to your brand" (http://music.muzak.com/solutions). The primary goal of these "sound layers" is to induce an "atmospheric stimulant" for a sales-promotional mood. Ambient sound is also referred to as department store or elevator music. In contrast to "absolute" music, ambient sound typically plays a secondary role for customers in their everyday life. An end in itself is missing. Instead, background music has a supporting effect for the achievement of other goals, e.g. to amuse customers, to put them at ease, to divert them, or to influence them in their decision-making. For this reason, ambient sound is often referred to as functional music. Most of the time, the impact of ambient sound is subliminal providing specialty stores, shopping centres, hotels, restaurants, and bars as well as trade fair stands and office spaces with an unintrusive atmosphere that makes employees and/or customers feel comfortable. While ambient sound might increase productivity of employees, particularly during mid-morning and mid-afternoon times (Solomon, 2007, p. 57), it can make customers stay longer and by doing so, make them spend more money.

While ambient sound is directly linked to sales, music collaboration primarily aims at finding a way to reach the target audience and deliver what the brand stands for. At the same time, music collaboration can lead to desired image transfers as is the case with testimonial or celebrity advertising. With the help of music compilations like *Mercedes-Benz* Mixed-Tapes (see article *Jingle all the Way? Basics of Audio Branding* and *Acoustic Brand Management and the Digital Revolution*), sponsoring of a concert tour of *Alicia Keys* by *Lexus*, or music events like the *Beck's* On Stage Festival Challenge (www.popsponsoring.de), companies try to transfer personality attributes of musicians and bands onto the brand (see article *Bands for Brands*). For this reason, possible music partners are mainly selected according to prevalent music clichés and the music taste of the target group. Likewise, movies, video clips, and commercials are being selected for product placements. Most of the times, however, these placements are carried through rather secretly. BMW for example, has been placing its cars in the entertainment industry for more than 30 years. One of the most famous ones was the appearance of the then new BMW

Z3 in the 17th James Bond film "Golden Eye" in 1995. Thereby, BMW highlighted visually the new roadster design and acoustically its engine power. Three other Bond movies with BMW makes followed. Overall, BMW services 650 projects per year (Hansen, 2008, p. 3). With respect to brand name placement the situation is somewhat different. While some companies might encourage book or song writers to include their brand name in their work, oftentimes brand names are being used without notice. In the US billboard charts, for example, 35% to 40% of all top 20 songs contain at least one brand name (Kilian, 2007, p. 335).

When a brand is appearing in a desired manner in the media, e.g. in a radio or TV spot, brand sound is oftentimes being used. It can take the form of brand themes, brand soundscapes, sound logos, jingles, or brand songs.

Brand songs and jingles can be characterized by their usage of vocals with understandable meaning. While brand songs like "Sail Away" from *Beck's* can – just like regular pop songs – span several minutes, jingles typically only last up to five seconds. They generally consist of a spoken or chanted brand name or claim, for example "*Sa-nos-tol*" (*Altana*) or "Kids and grown-ups love it so, the happy world of *Haribo*".

In contrast to jingles, sound logos can be described as short, mostly abstract acoustic sequences lasting 0.5 to 3 seconds (Lepa/Daschmann, 2007, p. 141). They function as "auditory cues" for the brand. Similarly, brand soundscapes can represent the character of a brand by combining sound objects, sound textures, brand themes and other acoustic traits of a brand. They typically last longer than sound logos, might be set up as infinite loops, and often function as brand-specific ambient sounds.

All audible brand elements, so far, have been surrounding the product, and thus, have been artificially added. Product sound, in contrast, refers to the design of a product itself or its packaging and the sounds naturally – by construction – linked to it. When conducting sound cleaning, certain sounds while using a product are being reduced or eliminated. In contrast, sound engineering or sound design aims at creating a brand-specific sound – a sound that is just right – by adjusting or exchanging certain parts of a product. Think of the sounds of a car engine, e.g. a *Porsche*, where sound engineering is an essential part of the brand experience and obtains up to 5% of the overall R&D investment (Wolfsgruber, 2005, p. 164). The engineers do not only have to focus on engine sound and driving noises, but also on the sound of snapping doors and the "click" noise of different switches inside. They are essential indicators of quality and safety as *Wolfsgruber* (2005) explains very vividly:

> "With a saturated "wham" the door falls into the lock. The ear hears safety. The electric window lift does not wheeze "uiuiuiuiui!", but grumbles dynamically "Bzzzzzz!". The ear hears energy. The blinker drums a dominant "Click-clack, Click-clack!" The ear hears control!" (p. 166)

However, sound engineering is not limited to cars. Many other industries conduct sound engineering as well. For example at *Bahlsen*, one of the leading cracker makers in Europe, a development team of 16 researchers works continuously at the optimal sound design for its pastry. When testing their products, the noises that emerge when biting and chewing are being transmitted via loudspeakers into the research lab where they are analyzed in detail (Fösken, 2006, p. 32) since the sound when eating a cracker has a significant impact on the overall evaluation of the pastry, for instance, whether it is fresh and of refined quality (see article *Jingle all the Way? Basics of Audio Branding*). Similarly, *Kellogg's* analyzes the texture of its cornflakes again and again to ensure optimal "crunchiness". Thereby, the company not only guarantees a flavorful product quality difference relative to its competitors but also an augmented acoustic impression that leads to brand preference and loyalty.

When defining product sound more broadly, sound icons come into play as well. Sound icons are the shortest acoustic brand elements. They can be part of the audio logo or the brand song. Typically, they incorporate an actual sound of everyday life or a stylised variation of a generic sound. Thereby, they provide a more or less strong acoustic reference to a product feature as does, for example, the "plopp" sound of a *Flensburger Pilsener* flip-top bottle being opened or the "zzzsch" sound when lifting up the crown cap of a bottle of *Coke* (Bronner, 2007, p. 88f.). Similarly, interactive sound objects refer to short sound sequences that have become popular in recent years with the rise of the internet and because of a shift from analogue to digital device control. While sound objects on websites help users herald an activity or navigate through the menu, they can also replace once existent mechanical sounds of a product that have ceased to exist due to technological advancement. When inserting a cordless *Siemens Gigaset* handset into its base station, for example, a short acoustic affirmation can be heard that informs the user that the handheld is connected to the base station and that the recharging process is activated.

As we have seen, the range of acoustical brand elements is vast. It spans from product sound to brand voice. It can primarily be used internally, like a corporate anthem, or externally like brand sound. In any case, acoustics are of growing importance among the different brand elements at hand. However, it is not until several brand elements are intelligently combined that the brand particularities can be expressed profoundly. We refer to these combinations of brand elements as brand signals.

4. Brand Signals as Communication Content

When several brand elements are combined, complex multi-sensory brand signals are obtained. They communicate the brand identity to all stakeholders, particularly to customers. Four types of brand signals can be distinguished. First of all, the product itself has to be considered, e.g. its design, quality, and functionality. Second, the media, from TV commercials and print ads to outdoor billboards and internet websites need to be kept in mind. Third, people, e.g. employees, testimonials, and customers are relevant brand signals, especially in industrial markets and service-oriented industries. Employees with direct customer contact, e.g. sales and service staff, play a significant role in forming the intended brand image. They act as brand ambassadors. Similarly, testimonials endorse the brand and customers define what image others have of the "typical user" of a brand. Our image of a *Harley-Davidson* biker differs significantly from a *Yamaha* owner as does our image of a *Mercedes-Benz* and a *Jaguar* driver. Finally, surroundings, also referred to as brand environments or brand experience worlds, play a significant role in forming a brand image. Typical examples are brand parks, brand events, and brand stores. Fairs and exhibitions, at which companies are present with their own brand stand, also play a significant role in forming desired associations (Kilian, 2008b, p. 61ff.). Figure 5 illustrates the linkage of brand elements and brand signals and provides a brief summary of the four brand signals mentioned above.

5. Brand Experiences

The brand identity is based on a single brand idea and specified by a set of brand values and corresponding brand elements. These brand-specific elements are then combined to form a set of brand signals which in turn are actively communicated to customers and other stakeholders via the product as well as via different media, people, and surroundings. As a result of this, experiences with the brand might create a new or change an existing brand image. Brand experiences are fundamental not only for the establishment, retention, and directed adjustment of brand-related associations but also for the accomplishment of a brand price premium and brand loyalty. According to *Schmitt* (1999), the following five types of experiences can be distinguished: sense, feel, think, act, and relate.

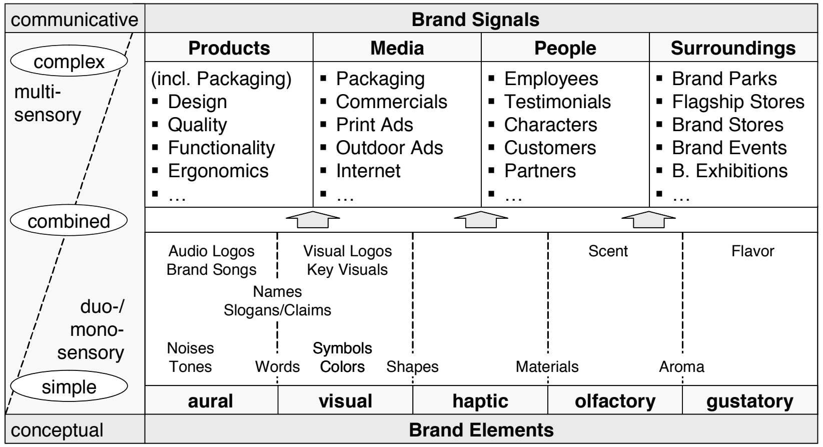

communicative
Brand Signals
complex
multi-sensory
Products
Media
People
Surroundings
(incl. Packaging)
▪ Design
▪ Quality
▪ Functionality
▪ Ergonomics
▪ …
▪ Packaging
▪ Commercials
▪ Print Ads
▪ Outdoor Ads
▪ Internet
▪ …
▪ Employees
▪ Testimonials
▪ Characters
▪ Customers
▪ Partners
▪ …
▪ Brand Parks
▪ Flagship Stores
▪ Brand Stores
▪ Brand Events
▪ B. Exhibitions
▪ …
combined
Audio Logos
Brand Songs
Visual Logos
Key Visuals
Scent
Flavor
Names
Slogans/Claims
duo-/mono-sensory
Noises
Tones
Words
Symbols
Colors
Shapes
Materials
Aroma
simple
aural
visual
haptic
olfactory
gustatory
conceptual
Brand Elements

Figure 5. From Brand Elements to Brand Signals.

A "sense" brand experience rests upon sensory experiences through sight, sound, touch, taste, and smell. "Feel" is based on inner feelings and emotions of customers and aims at creating an affective experience linked to a brand, ranging from mildly positive moods to strong feelings of pride and joy. Ideally, brand experiences provide "a steady flow of fantasies, feelings, and fun" (Holbrook/Hirschman 1982, p. 132). Next, "think" brand experiences appeal to the customer intellect, "creating cognitive, problem-solving experiences that engage customers creatively" (Schmitt, 1999, p. 67). They engage customers by providing surprise, intrigue, and possibly even provocation. The SUCCESS factors mentioned above can be applied here, too. The fourth type "act" refers to brand experiences having an impact on bodily experiences as well as on lifestyles, e.g. by showing customers alternative ways of using a product. "Relate", finally, expands the individual experience to joined experiences with others, e.g. to broader social systems like brand communities. They enable customers to interact with other, like-minded customers and, on a personal level, with the brand and its representatives. According to *Löwenfeld* and *Kilian*, the two key brand community experience drivers are mutual member support and brand-member interaction (2009). Figure 6 summarizes the four stages of the brand formation process.

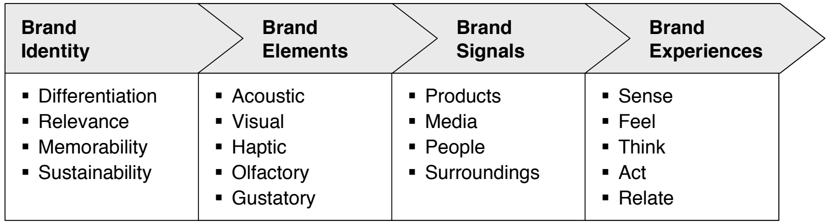

Brand Identity
Brand Elements
Brand Signals
Brand Experiences
▪ Differentiation
▪ Relevance
▪ Memorability
▪ Sustainability
▪ Acoustic
▪ Visual
▪ Haptic
▪ Olfactory
▪ Gustatory
▪ Products
▪ Media
▪ People
▪ Surroundings
▪ Sense
▪ Feel
▪ Think
▪ Act
▪ Relate

Figure 6. Stages of the Brand Formation Process.

As has been shown, one key instrument to help differentiate and memorize a brand identity is acoustics. Acoustical brand elements are an essential part of most brand signals and strongly enhance brand experiences as they affect customers strongly and in a direct manner that oftentimes goes unnoticed (but not without impact). They create sound brand experiences!

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"It is not rocket science, even if some may mystify things making the process seem complicated and therefore more valuable. The process, if it is a good one, must be logical and plausible."

(John Groves, 2009)

"The approach of using music to connect with viewers on a deep emotional level rather than a rational or cognitive level in advertising fundamentally redefined it as a brand-building tool."

(Rayan Parikh, 2009)