Take note of audio branding: Turn up the volume for marketing success

Category: Branding
written by Stewart Hodgson | 14 August 2018
Sound is more powerful than you'd think.

Have you ever wondered why we remember obscure tunes from TV shows for months at a time, yet struggle to remember what we had for breakfast yesterday?

You can recall the exact nuances and notes of a jingle like Coca-Cola's "Always the real thing" in an instant – but remembering where you put your car keys is practically impossible.

The reason that we respond so well to audio is the strong cognitive connection between memory and sound. As one of our most evocative senses, sound can change the way we feel, transport us through our memories, and even inspire action. Just think about how quickly the right piece of music can alter your mood, and you'll see what we're talking about.

With audio branding, companies can tap into the inherent power of sound to establish affinity with their target audience. While visual elements like your brand colours and logo are important to your growth, sound helps you to reach your customers on a brand-new level – untouched by images and text.

In fact, in a Harvard Business Review study, researchers found that the use of sound can positively differentiate a service or product by improving recall, creating customer preference and building trust.

So, how do you find your sound?

Tune in as we explore the world of audio branding.



What is audio branding? Tuning into your brand

Audio branding is everywhere.

In fact, the reach of audio branding is part of what makes the question: “What is audio branding?” so difficult to answer.

Audio branding exists in the secure feeling you get when you close your car door, and it makes that solid “click” sound. It’s in the energetic melodies that play when you set up your laptop or turn on your smartphone. Audio branding is even the thing that helps to create suspense when you’re listening to the theme tune for your favourite show.

Monitored by the Audio Branding Congress, this strategy for identity development is powerful because of the emotional connection it allows you to create with your customer. When we hear something, we feel something. Whether it’s a sense of

nostalgia from an old jingle, or a feeling of anticipation when we listen to the open credits of a movie.

Of course, audio branding isn't only valuable because of its emotional impact. Working with sound also allows you to reach your customers differently too. Unlike visual content that your customers need to sit down and pay attention to, audio content can reach your clients even when they're only partially paying attention.

Think of it this way. Your most recognisable brand asset is your logo. However, your logo can only reach people who are willing to look at it, absorb the shape, and remember the graphic. On the other hand, sound ends up weaving its way into our senses regardless of whether we're actively paying attention to it.

Just as your customers formulate perceptions of your company based on the graphics in your visual assets and the content you use in your marketing materials, they can also develop a feeling for you based on your "sound." The most common types of audio branding involve jingles, theme songs, and even catchphrases. However, you can add other aspects to your audio brand too, like celebrity voices, podcasts, and more.

As the experts over at Groves.de tell us, sound isn't just nice-to-have anymore, it's an "essential part of communication – a part that's able to change mood, behaviour, and perception."



The benefits of audio branding in 2018

Audio branding is becoming increasingly popular in the modern marketplace.

The concept of connecting to customers with sound isn't new. The first jingle was created sometime around 1926. However, up until recently, most companies have been so focused on text, visuals, and even video, that they've forgotten to embrace the power of audio.

Of course, now that the nature of sound is changing, businesses are re-thinking the way they build their audio brand.

For instance, around 26% of Americans listen to podcasts every month. That doesn't seem like much at first until you consider the fact that only 21% of Americans are Catholic. In other words, podcasts have more of a reach in the US than an entire

religion.

On top of a rising demand for podcast entertainment, research is starting to show that audio-based searches for information are becoming more popular too. Juniper Research indicates that by 2022, 55% of households will have a smart speaker. Aside from giving you a way to tap into the latest trends, here are just some of the benefits of audio branding for 2018 and beyond:

1. You'll create more branded moments

Sound is everywhere. For most of us, it's something that we simply can't escape. While it's important to create an identity around how you look and feel, it's crucial not to overlook the importance of audio interactions too. Just look at Starbucks, for example. The CEO of the world's biggest coffee company was famously quoted saying: "Music has played a pivotal role" in the company's success. Starbucks uses music to improve the way its customers feel in a store and facilitate loyalty.

2. You'll drive familiarity

For your customers to trust you, they need to feel familiar with you. To some extent, this means making sure that you provide a consistent experience with your customer service, brand images, and marketing materials. However, you can also create a sense of familiarity through sound too. For instance, even the first couple of opening lines of the "Holidays are Coming" song from Coca-Cola is enough to bring an image of the company to mind.

3. You'll stand out

It's an incredibly noisy world out there. If you want to make an impact in an over-saturated market, then you need a way of making your voice heard. As other companies continue to focus

on text and video, you can be the brand that sets yourself apart with something novel yet proven to make an impact. Tap into audio branding examples that fit with the image you're trying to create for your brand, and you can rest assured that your audience will sit up and take notice.

4. You'll connect on an emotional level

One of the best answers to the question "What is audio branding?" is "A way to connect with your audience's emotions." Sound in all of its forms is a fantastic way to connect with your audience and drive specific feelings. Consider how the creepy sound effects used in horror movies make you feel, or how you can always push yourself to accomplish more in your workouts when you have the right tunes playing.

5. You'll be heard when you can't be seen

As mentioned above, your logos, graphics, and even brand photography are all useful for reaching your customers. However, your clients can't appreciate your visual assets when their eyes are focused on other things – like the road ahead in their car, or the emails they're replying to on their phone. Audio branding ensures that you still have a way to connect with your audience when their eyes aren't available.



Audio branding strategy: Using sound to strengthen your company

Now that you know why audio branding is so important for your company, you can start to think about how you're going to find your sound.

The time of the ear is here at last. Whether you're planning on marketing your business with your own jingle, or you want to explore the possibilities of sonic branding, it all starts with figuring out what your audio identity should be. Here are a few top tips to help you find your way towards audio branding that resonates with your audience.

1. Explore the full world of audio

While it's easy to get caught up in finding the perfect jingle for your company or choosing the right voice for your advertisements, there's so much more to audio branding. Sounds are evident in various places throughout the customer journey.

Your audio branding efforts don't just include your marketing strategies, but every sound you use to connect with your customer. That might include:

- The theme that plays before your ads or podcasts.
- The jingles you use in your marketing.
- The sounds that your devices make when they switch on.
- The sound of clicking through your website.
- The music you play in your stores.
- The "on hold" music that plays when a customer calls you.
- The types of music you play at your events.
- The voices of the people who speak for your company.

If you decide to commit to an audio branding strategy, make sure that you create an entire soundscape for your company.

2. Analyse your customers

As always, the best way to make sure that you're having the right impact on the right people is to start with a solid understanding of who you're selling to. The sounds that appeal to business people in search of security and innovation will be different to the sounds that resonate with a younger consumer looking for fun and frivolity. Ask yourself:

- How old is my average customer?
- What kind of brands will they like?
- What audio branding do those companies have?
- What are they looking for from me?

With your buyer persona and an overview of your USP, you'll be able to create sounds that not only demonstrate the unique nuances of your company but also make your customers feel exactly how you want them to feel about your business.

3. Choose your Emotional Resonance

Organisations like the Audio Branding Congress work with

hundreds of brands every year who use the right selection of sounds to convey certain feelings to their customers. A good way to determine what kind of experiences you want to create for your customers, and which instruments you'll need to use to deliver those feelings, is to conduct a competitor analysis. Examine some of the other brands in your industry and find out what they're doing with their audio branding. For example:

- **Sensuality:** Romantic and symphonic songs can help to create seductive experiences for audiences, ideal for perfume advertisements and lifestyle companies that want to convey luxury. Brass instruments, string instruments, and soft sounds are ideal here.
- **Family-friendly tunes:** Fun and friendly musical tones are great for companies who want to appeal to families. Jaunty notes from guitars, ukuleles and jazz rhythms can hook your audience.
- **Dramatic:** Loud, sudden or dramatic sounds can help to make your product or business seem more important. Though it's important not to choose anything too overwhelming.

4. Keep it short and memorable

While it might be tempting to use your favourite song from one of your most-loved artists to brand your company, that's rarely the best audio branding strategy to go for. After all, people already have pre-existing perceptions of popular songs, which means that you can't begin to create a feeling for your brand from scratch.

At the same time, your audio branding examples need to be short and sweet. The shorter the sound is, the easier it will be for your customers to remember. For instance, think about the Toys R Us jingle, or the tune that plays when you see the Intel logo on your computer or TV screen. A couple of seconds is all you need to connect with your audience. Once you've

found your notes, make sure you include them in your brand manifesto.

5. Maintain a consistent voice

Just like a fingerprint, your brand voice is unique. As audio becomes a more crucial part of both marketing and branding, you'll find that a personalised brand voice is incredibly valuable to your future. Beyond your visual logo and a consistent personality, your consistent tone of voice is what helps to drive familiarity with your customers.

While you can demonstrate your tone in your videos, and written content, it's also important to get it right when you're working on your audio branding too. Think about the kind of sounds that best represent you and the audio you would never use for your company. Consider which kind of people you'd like to speak for your brand, and who simply wouldn't fit with your image. Keep the voice you're creating as consistent as possible.



Audio branding examples: Inspiration to take note of

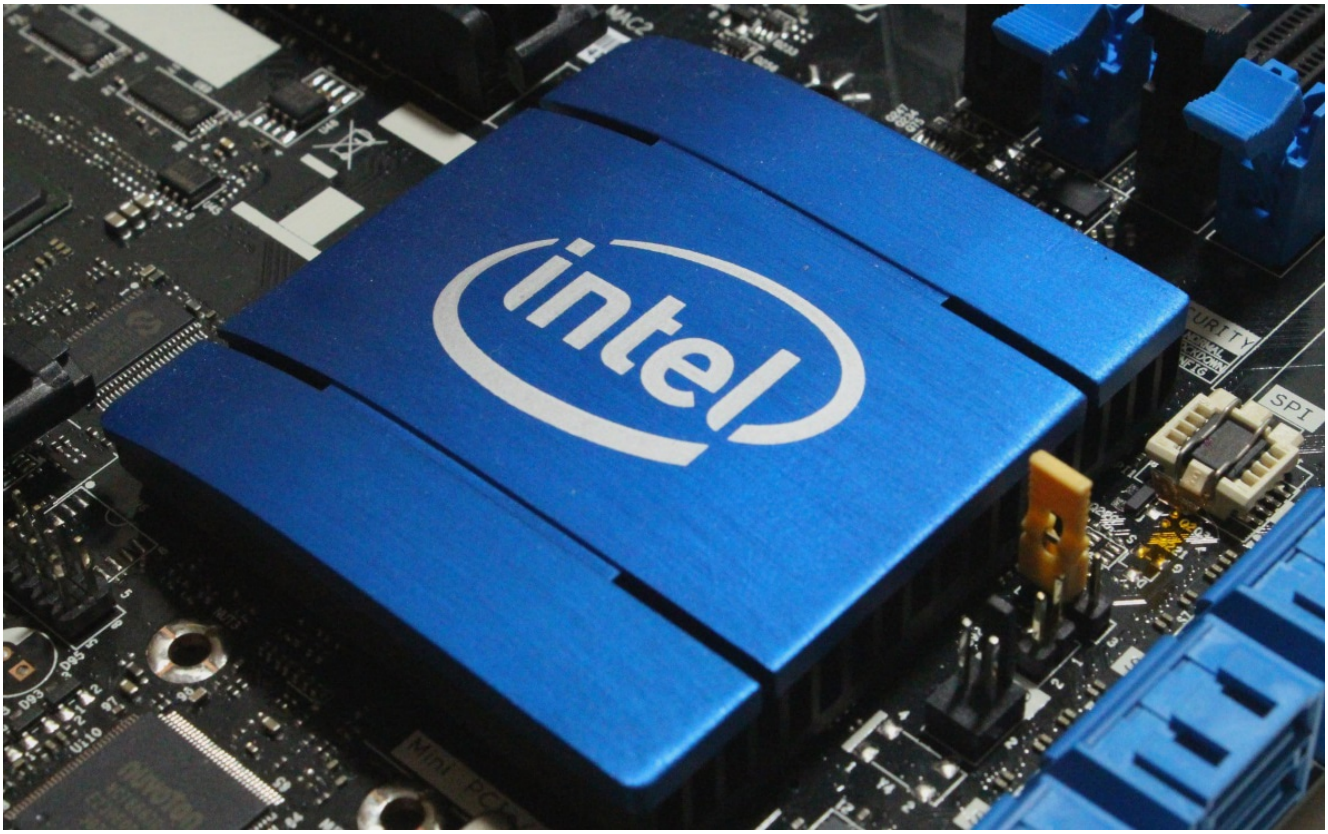
If you've reached this point in our article and you're still a little foggy about the answer to: "What is audio branding and what can it do for my business?" then you're in luck.

Sometimes, the easiest way to get a better understanding of what audio branding can do for you is to check out some of the ways you can use it. After all, audio branding isn't just about adding any old sound into your marketing strategy. The wrong kind of music can just turn into noise, and you don't want your audio branding to be nothing but a headache or a distraction.

Looking at some examples can give you an insight into how brands work alongside audio branding companies to build stronger connections with their audience. Here are just 3 audio examples that you're bound to be familiar with.

Audio branding examples 1: Intel and brand recognition

Look at the Intel logo, or say the brand's name, and you're sure to hear that tell-tale 5-note sequence in your head. In fact, at the height of the tune's use, it was ranked as the second most addictive sound in the world, coming just shortly after the sound of a baby laughing. Pretty crazy right?



Intel's audio branding was first introduced in 1994 as part of the Intel Inside campaign. Although the simple tune was composed more than two decades ago, it's helped Intel to become one of the most recognisable brands in the world.

According to the person who composed the Intel sound, Walter Werzowa, the audio branding came from the rhythm he heard in his head when listening to the Intel Inside tagline. Back in 2016, Intel even launched a remastered version of their sound combined with the Beethoven's fifth symphony – designed to convey the idea that Intel creates amazing and iconic experiences.

Audio branding examples 2: Lenovo and brand identity

There's a good chance that you remember the "Hello Moto" audio branding more than you recall the brand name "Lenovo."

When Lenovo designed its Hello Moto mnemonic, it wanted to create a feeling of innovation, while showcasing its brand

identity as a bold, quirky and unexpected company. Motorola brought “Hello Moto” back after several years of ignoring their audio branding altogether to drive nostalgia among customers.



Along with the unique logo, the Hello Moto sound bite is an important component of Motorola’s identity and heritage in the digital space. The 2016 campaign was intended to drive brand awareness by reminding customers of the nostalgic sound they used to hear when they opened up their Razr mobile phones.

Audio branding examples 3: Coca-Cola and brand loyalty

We’ve already mentioned Coca-Cola a couple of times during this article about audio branding. However, it’s difficult to answer the question “what is audio branding?” without an in-depth examination of this popular soft drink. Coca-Cola is all about using strategic sound bites to upgrade its brand and enhance the experiences that it gives to its customers.



Take a moment to imagine the last Coca-Cola advert you saw in your head. Along with fun music and the “Always Coca-Cola” jingle, you probably also heard the satisfied sounds of customers, the pop of bottle tops and the sound of a drink fizzing over ice. All these unique sounds help Coca-Cola to create a more visceral marketing experience.

The soundscape that Coca-Cola uses is so iconic that it surpasses language or geographic boundaries. The fact that the brand can create the “Always Coca-Cola” line in melody, rather than words, helps it to create an audio branding strategy that goes beyond language. After all, this is a company that’s all about selling an experience.



Find your sound with an audio branding agency

With so many benefits available from audio branding, you're probably wondering why more companies and brands don't pay more attention to the impact of sound. All too often, audio is considered an afterthought, either pushed to the last minute, misused, or ignored completely.

However, around 41% of customers consider sound to be a "central part" of brand communication. In fact, one study conducted into the power of the "I'm lovin' it" jingle from McDonald's found that the sound alone improved the way people felt about the fast food chain. After hearing the jingle, customers were 9% more likely to say they felt "happy" about the brand.

Audio branding has a part to play in a company's strategy for success. If you're not already using sound to strengthen your company, then now could be the perfect time to upgrade your

campaigns. After all, audio branding isn’t just a great way to get customers and clients to remember your business. You can also use music to make people feel a certain way about your service or product.

As customer loyalty becomes increasingly difficult to come by, it’s crucial for today’s companies to do whatever it takes to strengthen their connections with their target audience. With audio branding, you can make your business more memorable, and ensure that you’re more than just a logo and a name. Isn’t it about time you spoke to an audio branding agency and found your sound?

If you enjoyed this article, you might enjoy these too:

– Digital marketing techniques to perfect your presence

– How to create a corporate brand with style and substance

– From confusion to clarity: Building brand architecture

– Ten web design trends to stand out online this year