The Process of Brand Sound

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1. Introduction
When dealing with the development of an acoustic brand identity, it is advised to take a closer look at the planning, development and supervision of this often complex task beforehand to be able to create customized solutions. This article is meant to help gain insight as to how brand sound development can be operated and which methods are needed to approach the topic brand identity and sound. The article is to be seen as a process outline, based on the diploma thesis Brand Sound Process. Methodology and Direction of Pattern of Acoustic Brand Profile Development (german title Der Markenklangprozess) and on the author’s practical experience.

It is also meant to help creators of audio and visual content approach this seemingly abstract topic. Furthermore, it aims to provide decision makers with insight into the concept of successful brand sound development and experts with inspiration to further develop their own methods.

2. Process Theory
The selected course of system conditions is called a process. It stems from the Latin word procedere, which means to proceed. In terms of [ISO 12207] a process is a set of interrelated means and actions that transform input into results. Processes are often separated into smaller processes.

2.1 Models of Process
Process models of brand development, as well as sufficiently used marketing plans, were observed and analyzed. Useful basics were also found in the stable process models of software or automotive development. The following approaches can be found when dealing with process definitions and models: First of all there are condition definitions. In determinate processes every condition is the result of a preceding condition. In stochastic processes there is a given chance that the condition of a system is a result of preceding conditions.
Chronological definitions can be found in so-called continuous processes such as power generation, and discontinuous processes such as agriculture. The words material (physical operations on actual objects) as well as informational (the exchange or handling of information) define the material-related processes.

For example: service processes can either be developed in a material or informational manner. The processes that contain the planning and control of aims and measures, as well as personnel management and organizational-structure arrangement are described as management processes.

Operative processes depict goods and services, the outcome of which can either be material or informational. The concept of core process (a derivation of core competence), or primary process, comes from the area of business administration. Core process or primary process consists of a combination of activities, decisions, information and material flow. Together these form the competitive edge of a business. Support Processes, on the other hand, support the core process.

2.2 Process Design

The basic pattern of a brand sound process is made up of the following stages:

Objective > Planning > Decision > Execution > Control

The design of the brand sound process is derived from this basic structure below:

![Figure 1. Basic structure of brand-sound process.](https://doi.org/10.5771/9783845216935-110)

**Core Process**
- A. Location
- B. Orientation
- C. Production
- D. Implementation
- E. Inspection

**Support Processes**
- 1. Project Management (PM)
- 2. Quality Management (QM)
2.3 Brand Sound Techniques
Based on the comprehension of brand identity, it is advised to develop individually adapted techniques.

Brand Sound Programmes
A. Modular Programme
Coordinated sound system. Especially interesting for businesses and brands with a range of products, where brand sound elements can be put into effect. An example at this point would be the Avira (German manufacturer of anti-virus software) brand sound.

B. Modification Programme
Development based upon an already existing sound space. Usually found in the shape of a brand song or audio logo. Example: O2 A song by the group Leftfield serves as a sound space. This either remains constant over time or is slightly modified.

C. Attribute Focused Programme
A single music or sound attribute is focused upon and thus enables thematic variations. Example: UPS: Tango as an attribute. Red Bull: a voice as an attribute.

3. Core Process Content
One of the components of the brand sound core process is the stage that directly deals with development of an acoustic brand identity.

3.1 Core Process Stage 1: Locating Brand and Sound
The first stage is about identifying the current state of the market. This includes market and competition situation, business structures (employees, branches etc.), supply, the history and philosophy of a business. Furthermore an analysis of self image and public image should be made, to provide objective insight to the business.

Acoustic Competition
Acoustic competition describes sound events in the sensory environment of the application area. Within the brand sound development for a software manufacturer, for example, it is of great importance to analyze and evaluate the acoustic signals of a computer environment.

3.2 Core Process Stage 2: Brands and Sounds – First Orientation

Verbal Sensitization Part 1 – The Orientation Workshop
How do you bring participants in contact with the abstract topic of Sound Definition in a short and precise manner, without scaring them away or swamping them with seemingly scientific instruments, hence spoiling interest in the topic? You try to sensitize them. In doing so, it should be clear which sound rank the participants of an orientation workshop are in.
Unlike visual brand awareness, sound awareness is in a far more rudimentary condition. It is possible to provide a basis for sound and music understanding by means of conversation, description and lateral thinking methods, as well as discussion rounds on the topic of sound. Subsequently, methods of sound sensitization are described.

**Sound Adjective Selection**
The workshop participants are asked to write down all associations, ideas, application areas etc. they can come up with in connection with brand personality and sound, in a predetermined amount of time (between 5 and 10 minutes). The results of this brainstorming are then evaluated and documented together.

**Lateral Thinking**
This well-known creative technique is used to stimulate the participant’s capacity for abstract thought. It also serves as a good training for the following workshop chapters.

**Object Sound Description**
Two objects are to be described in terms of sound impression based on their appearance. Sound Game: ‘I hear with my little ear…” Two groups are formed to compete against each other in a sound game. Course of the game: One team member at a time listens to a well-known sound example through headphones (for example: raindrops). This team member then has to describe the sound to the other team members, but cannot be concrete, i.e. cannot use descriptions that create connotations.

**Reflections Round**
The problem that arises through subjective experiences and associations becomes clear quite quickly in the following conversation. By dealing with sound in general, its effect on individuals and the manifestation of subliminal influence, a basis is created upon which the acoustic methods of sensitization can be established.

**Brand and Sound Sensitization (Part 2) – The Orientation Workshop**
The second part of the workshop contains brand specific parameters like brand essence, brand values, goals, visions etc. Brainstorm techniques (mind-mapping etc.) help to create a shared understanding of brands.

**Acoustic Sensitization**
Talking about sound is one of the best ways to analyze and evaluate what is heard in a brand context. By means of quantitative and qualitative evaluation methods in the form of polarity profiles, brand sound preferences can be determined. In the next step these preferences lead to a relevant catalogue of requirements.
Orientation Conclusion
So far this exercise has shown that the separate sound query modules have to either be specifically customized, according to the respective projects, or they need to be redesigned completely in order to master the mass-market of sounds.

Brand Sound Moods
After sorting and documenting the brand and sound specifications in a catalogue of requirements, the composers, or rather the sound designers, can be briefed. The sound moods are to be seen as an impression of brand sound. All the elements of brand sound are to be derived from this. In other words, they are the foundation of brand sound. The sound moods are developed in collaboration with the sound designers and are then embedded in various formats.

Sound Moods And Their Formats

*Moodtrack*
A 10 – 30 second soundtrack.
Suitable for: Presentations (selection process).

*Moodtrailer*
An audio-visual production of separate moods. Suitable for: Presentations (selection process) and for AV relevant Brand sound programmes.

*Sound-Mood Architecture*
Core cells model. Also used in the final phase of the process.
Suitable for: Presentations (selection process).

*Sound-Mood Set*
Back-up model for derivations in presentations. This back-up model consists of a music track arranged in succession (sound element A > sound element A+B > sound element A+B+C etc.). Suitable for: Presentations (selection process). The Brand sound techniques matching the brand identities can be found in the catalogue of requirements.

Mood Conclusion
The display formats are suited for the customers and projects depending on their preferences. An integrated programme developed for a linen goods company, for example, needs a display format that can show a scope of sound elements.

An entertainment company on the other hand, would pay more attention to sound quality and effect of the track (sound duration). Putting oneself in the position of the customer, at a point when insecurity arises and help is needed, is essential in combination with these display tools. In future more display forms will definitely be needed to cope with oncoming media etc.
Selection Of The Appropriate Mood
The selection of an ideal sound mood is something that should be done in collaboration with
the decision makers. In doing so, it is important to use a conclusive evaluation and selection
procedure. In the past, the following procedures have produced very good results:

Catalogue Of Requirements
The catalogue of requirements, based on the orientation results, is also used in another
workshop. Suitable for: complex mood layers and decision makers with little affinity to
sound.

Query Matrix
A preferred mood is chosen in a common dialogue according to notation. Suitable for:
theme focused moods.

Scenario Evaluation
Assembly of a typical sound application surrounding for a qualitative evaluation. An
everday situation is simulated and the sound events are evaluated according to func-
tion, brand fit and effect. Suitable for: Brand sound designs related to their surroundings
(Museums, exhibitions etc.).

3.3 Core Process Stage 3: Production Of The Elements
All the elements based on the selected brand sound moods can now be prepared. At this
point it is advised to do one more test round in order to counteract the routine-deafness of
the sound designers.

3.4 Core Process Stage 4: Implementation
Brand sound developments arise in situations such as upcoming advertising campaigns, com-
mercial launches, redesigns, brand expansions and even a change of crew… As a person in
charge of an acoustic brand management, it is important to stay in close contact with those
responsible in order to act accordingly if technical problems or obscurities should arise. A
sound style-guide is a useful tool when it comes to directing sound as an integrated part of
brand communication. The sound style guide includes sound parameters, scores, application
guidelines as well as technical descriptions and instructions.

3.5 Core Process Stage 5: Inspection
A target group’s stylistic preferences and perception can change, therefore it is essential to
constantly verify the brand sound and adjust it if necessary. There are no rules as to how
often a check-up should be performed. However it is advised to react to social events or
musical preferences.
3.6 Support Process: Project Management
An important part of successful brand sound development is project management. It constitutes the interface of the different areas and is a fundamental component of brand sound development.

3.7 Support Process: Quality Management
Efficient quality management is needed to ensure successful further development of existing models and methods. Sound brand creators should also be aware of their ethical responsibility towards the environment. Keyword: sound ecology. For example the Deutsche Telekom reacts to current events by varying their audio logo (whistling, trumpeting, etc.).

Conclusion
The core of acoustic brand profiling is acting responsibly when dealing with customers and creative people. Regrettably brand sound seems to be creating a gold-digger-type mood of late. Many people see it as a way of making quick money. To that effect, many brands end up with more harmful than supporting results.

With the help of a plan, provided it is followed and not used for purposes other than intended, the wheat is separated from the chaff. When it comes to responsible dealings with brand sound in a social context, my appeal is: not everything that can be given a sound, needs one…

Responsibility sometimes means: silence takes courage!

References


