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Deutsche Mediengiganten wie **ProSiebenSat.1** und **Axel Springer** suchen ihr Glück im Silicon Valley. Doch Venture Capitalists sind schwer zugänglich. W&V vor Ort.



# The Sound of Chocolate

**AUDIO** *Sonic branding is still unpopular - despite the undisputed effectiveness of sound. Agencies dread creative limitations, while businesses dread cost overruns. It is high time that changed.*

*"We initially felt that Hornbach's sound logo didn't quite hit the spot. But then we realized: It's so outlandish it could actually work."*

Guido Heffels, Heimat

What does a bar of chocolate sound like? Not just any chocolate bar, no - that fine, practical, square one. Does it sound tender? Softly melting? Or rather crispy? Crunchy? Does it have the same sound in Italy ("quadratopraticobuono") as it does in France ("carré-pratiquegourmand") and the US ("quality-chocolate-squared")? In short, does chocolate offer an acoustic recognition value? Ritter Sport invested time and effort investigating just that - by conducting audits and workshops. The result was an audio style guide for the brand as well as a product sound tool kit for ad agencies - a sonic library of chocolate ranging from opening its characteristic wrapper to chewing off a piece or two.

Few others approach the matter as consequently as Ritter Sport did, at least not in Germany. "We are not exactly getting overrun by customers looking for audio branding," says Fabian Frese, managing director of creation at Kolle Rebbe. "Most of them don't have any idea of how essential it can be for their brand." Ralf Heuel agrees. "While visual concepts of corporate design are often allocated extensive budgets, companies disregard audio branding as an unnecessary luxury," says the managing director of creation at Grabarz&Partner. "Anything that can't be seen or touched has a hard time being recognized or appreciated." Clearly a missed opportunity, says Heuel. Audio branding offers consumers immediate brand identification, regardless if broadcast on TV, on the radio, or online - including the emotional opening line. Given the amount of channels and commercials nowadays, it is more crucial than ever to stand out.

And everybody has experienced the power of a catchy jingle. Regardless of its instrumentation and pace, Telekom's "Dida-didi-





da" is unmistakable and immediately reminiscent of the brand even if only listened to half-heartedly. The same counts for Intel's now legendary sound logo. Twenty years ago, the Viennese Walter Werzowa composed it of more than a dozen of sounds, including xylophon, anvil and bells. The sound logo itself as well as its aggressive implementation certainly played an important part in Intel's rise from an unknown "ingredient brand" to a successful, resounding one. Another example is INGDiBa's

"Diba-diba-du": The online bank, until 2005 simply known as "DiBa", has used the witty surrogate of "Schubidu" in its commercials since 1999. "The jingle and its chanted "DiBa-DiBa-Du" form a fundamental

part of the brand," says Annette Schilling, who works for the bank's marketing department. A sound logo check conducted by RMS proved a degree of brand awareness of 96% for the jingle. Not surprisingly, the brand is sticking with its "Diba-diba-du," even if it has been using a new melody since autumn 2013.

Sound logos are at the heart of audio branding, as a "sort of acoustic key-visual," as Fabian Frese puts it. Ideally, sound logos turn the company's brand promise into notes. The famous Intel chimes, for example, follow the rhythm of its long standing claim "Intel Inside." The ING-DiBa jingle toys with the claim "The bank and you." As for Hornbach's "Yippie-ya-ya-yippie-yippie-yeah": "It was our task to capture the enthusiasm of people who love DIY," says Heimat's Chief Creative Officer Guido Heffels in an unpublished interview conducted by Uli Reese, managing director of the Frankfurt-based audio branding agency iV2. Every now and again, Reese publishes conversations with the advertising industry's crème-de-la-crème on the iV2 blog, titled "Great Minds on Music." Heffels is part of that illustrious group.

Hornbach's "Yippie-ya-ya" was intoned by Hawaiian singers.

"Initially, we felt it didn't hit the spot," Heffels admits. "But then we realized: This is different from everything else we've heard so far. And it's so outlandish that it could actually work."

### An audio logo, resonating with nostalgia

And it does work. "Hornbach's 'Yippie-ya-ya' is certainly one of Germany's most well-known audio logos," admits Heuel, head of Grabarz, admiringly.

Surprisingly so - the jingle has "nothing to do with the usual DIY environment." The sound is a reminiscence of Wild West pioneers, who pieced together ranches and saloons with their bare hands, and brings back to mind the times when men were cowboys. In contrast with today's DIY, the jingle is ironic and, at the same time, it triggers a certain nostalgia. A somewhat romantic, yet detached hardware store-feeling, so to speak.

Sound logos are a powerful means to "create an association to a brand," writes John Groves, the audio branding industry's grey eminence, in an essay. "They enter our perception nearly unnoticed, and are often then registered subconsciously." Which is what makes them so irresistible. There's no escape. At the same time, they can become obtrusive - at the latest when we consciously notice them. And that moment is essential as it forms the connection between chord progression and corporate claim. Which is also likely the reason for Intel's reckless commercial presence: When PC manufacturers advertise their Intel processors, the IT giant's

*"Music is always a code, one that can trigger identification or dissociation. It's a tricky, but fundamental asset for influencing brand perception."*

Stephan Vogel, CCO,  
Ogilvy & Mather

*"I can see the potential of audio logos. However, we need a certain flexibility that allows us to use a variety of music in campaigns."*

Matthias Schmidt, DDB



sound logo clears the way through the acoustic ambiance. "It is indeed an extremely rigid implementation of sound," says iV2 manager Uli Reese. No fading in our out, just an irruption of sound, a source of irritation. You hear it, but you might not like it. Dropping sound elements into commercials like foreign objects can "tick people off," says Groves. Even INGDiBa's comparably smooth "Diba-diba-du" doesn't resonate with everyone. 49 percent of respondents did not like the jingle, according to the RMS sound logo check. "It's a matter of personal taste," says Fabian Frese. "It's just like music: one song, 30 opinions." Which can create problems for the agency, internally and externally, in communicating with the customer, even at the early stages of the search for an audio identity. "Audio is the instrument that is rationally the most difficult one to grasp in the daily exchange with the customer," explains Stefan Kolle in another unpublished conversation of the interview series "Great Minds on Music" with Reese. "Everybody perceives music in a different way." Agencies subsequently appear to neglect the matter just as often as their clients to avoid annoyances - not least because audio branding is costly. "Businesses usually allocate no more than one or two percent of production budgets to audio production," says Reese. And that is too little to create an extensive listening experience for a brand, because it comprises more than just a sound logo.

### Music and voiceovers create a distinctive identity

Audio branding defines all audio touch points between consumer and brand, including music, speech, sound effects and the soundscape. The majority of advertisers still seem overwhelmed by that. Background music, for example, is often just as disregarded as a memorable voiceover. "Clients and agencies completely underestimate the importance of both," Fabian Frese says. Voiceover artists with a distinctive timbre have the power to become a trademark (given that they don't also work for the brand's competitors), or even more: They can create a signature mood. Voiceover artists like Robert De Niro's dubbing artist Christian Brückner, as well as the late Otto Sander, used to be extremely popular in the advertising industry, but "now brands often lack courage to stand out with a distinctive voiceover," says Frese. Ikea had that courage. That Scandinavian accent, with a certain lightheartedness: Whenever we hear the voice of Ola Jannhov in radio or TV spots, we think of the Swedish furniture store.

"Brands can't afford to sound replaceable," says Uli Reese. Ritter Sport understood that and assigned the extensive project to iV2, who tackled it in collaboration with lead agency Kolle Rebbe. It all starts with an analysis: The branding strategy, roots, and history of the brand have to be taken into consideration as well as the brand's competitors. Reese: "We then develop an audio profile of the brand - mood boards, which turn



Dirk Nowitzki as ING-DiBa talent.



## The Schubidu-bank

Very smoothly, ING-DiBa readjusts its sound logo.

A new audio logo, implemented last autumn. The singer's voice is familiar, and she still purrs softly "Diba-diba-du." But the music is no longer Bert Kaempfert's "Strangers in the Night," it's a new composition. ING-DiBa wants to become more personable. The bank introduced its audio rebranding four years ago, when jazz singer Melody Gardot took over for the big band voice of Ron Williams. The previously solemn, heavy jingle received a makeover with a lighter, more sensual arrangement. The rebranding was successful: A before/after analysis showed that the brand awareness and recall both increased. "Market research has shown that respondents don't just say "Dibadu", but they can sing the jingle," Annette Schilling of ING-DBia's marketing department says. "And they smile while doing so."

brand values into sound. The result, that exact result, is what the brand sounds like" - as does its product, the chocolate. While the sounds of the unwrapping of the chocolate and the biting into the chocolate had already been part of previous TV ads of the brand, Reese's research showed that they didn't represent the authentic sound of an actual Ritter Sport bar. They were modular components of sound libraries that had been used for the campaigns in various ways. The new audio branding, however, put things in order and created clear guidelines, the "audio style guide," for the implementation of sound elements, as well as an extensive database of sounds that were uniquely Ritter Sport. "Nothing is based on pure gut instinct," Reese clarifies. Reese's scientific approach relies on thorough market research, and is in line with the brand values. Heuel, manager of Grabarz, however, warns of an overly strict system of rules. Audio guidelines as a creative guard railing? Okay. "But don't be building road blocks," warns the Hamburg native. "They might make you seem consistent - but you'll also be consistently boring."

**Martin Bell**

"Audio is the rationally most difficult instrument to grasp in our daily conversations with clients."

Stefan Kolle,  
Kolle Rebbe

