

Exploring the Influence of Music in Social Media  
Advertising on Perceived Brand Personality: A  
Generation Z Perspective

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Master's Thesis in International Business

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Åbo Akademi University

2022

**ÅBO AKADEMI – FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES, BUSINESS  
AND ECONOMICS**

Abstract for Master's thesis

<b>Subject:</b> International Business
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<b>Title:</b> Exploring the Influence of Music in Social Media Advertising on Perceived Brand Personality: A Generation Z Perspective
<b>Supervisor:</b> Irene Kujala
<p><b>Abstract:</b> Previous research in the field of audio branding has focused largely on background music in an in-store context. However, music is also utilized extensively in other contexts, such as advertising. Music can be used to create and manage a brand identity, of which brand personality is a major component. The purpose of this thesis is to help create a more comprehensive understanding of the effects of audio branding in a digital environment by exploring the influence of advertising music on perceived brand personality. More specifically, the thesis focuses on Generation Z and the social media platform Youtube.</p> <p>The theoretical framework includes a background to branding, brand identity and brand personality. It also presents previous research regarding audio branding and the use of music in advertising. The fundamentals of social media marketing are also reviewed. The thesis is a qualitative study and uses semi-structured interviews as the source of empirical data.</p> <p>The results of the study suggest that advertising music has the potential to elicit brand personality traits that are congruent with the prior perceptions of the brand for a Generation Z audience.</p>
<b>Key words:</b> audio branding, brand personality, social media advertising, Generation Z
<b>Date:</b> 12.05.2022
<b>Number of pages:</b> 81 (98)

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# 1. Introduction

This chapter serves as an introduction to the thesis by presenting the background, problem, purpose, and research questions. Furthermore, an overview of the chosen research method, relevant terms and definitions as well as structure, limitations and delimitations are also provided in this chapter.

## 1.1. Background and problem

Music is known to produce several reactions in human beings. Writing for *Helsingin Sanomat*, Viljanen (2021) explains that the human brain has, in fact, learned to react to music in such a way that music produced simply by our imagination manages to activate the same areas of the brain as actual, heard tunes. Viljanen (2021) elaborates by stating that listening to music activates the motor cortex, which is why merely listening to music sometimes makes the body move even when stationary. In fact, music touches the parts of the human brain that account for powerful sensory pleasures, and the pleasure aroused by music activates the same sections of the limbic system as eating, sex or drugs (Viljanen, 2021).

Thus, it is unsurprising that the use of sound in marketing communication, especially in the form of background music in physical retail settings, has been researched rather extensively over the years. Research in this field includes the effects of different musical genres (Areni & Kim, 1993), of different tempos (Milliman, 1982) and of music versus its absence (Andersson, Kristensson, Wästlund & Gustafsson, 2012) on consumer behavior- and experience in physical stores. Most likely the oldest form of audio branding, the jingle, has also been studied to a great extent (Bindea, Seserman, Bara & Iancu, 2009), as have so-called audio logos (Renard,

2017), from which one of the most recognized is probably “I’m lovin’ it” by McDonald’s. In addition, concepts such as atmospherics (Kotler, 1973) and sensory marketing (Hultén, 2009) have aided the establishment of a more holistic approach to the in-store experience and fortified the role of sound in marketing communication.

Thus, it is widely recognized by marketing practitioners that the correct use of music and other auditory elements in marketing communication can be a very effective tool not only in-store, but also for creating positive brand associations through advertising, which is also why it is widely utilized by firms of all kinds. The Covid-19 pandemic has also forced brands to focus even more on their online presence, and the growth of demand for digital solutions from the customer-side has not only been fueled by existing ‘heavy users’ of e-commerce solutions, but also by those who had previously been hesitant about shopping online. These people have had little choice but to adapt to this ‘new normal’, as they have refrained from going to public spaces during the pandemic (Takashima, 2020). To put it in numbers, Wertz (2020) reports that as of April 21st [2020], e-commerce in the U.S. and Canada has seen a staggering year-over-year growth of 129%, and all online retail orders have surged by 146%. As there is ever-growing pressure for retailers to transfer from brick-and-mortar -focused business strategies to the world of e-commerce, as mentioned before, a myriad of both brand- and tactical advertising opportunities open up with the potential of providing immense value for marketers. The benefits of digital, when compared to traditional advertising, include the adaptability of content, more efficient consumer targeting and higher reach per dollar (Ma & Du, 2018). One of the most widely used digital marketing channels is social media, and as Tiago and Veríssimo (2014) state, it is no longer about whether people are using social media, but rather what platforms they are logging in to and why they opt for the applications that they do.

Simply put, choosing *what* instead of *if* is the question companies should be

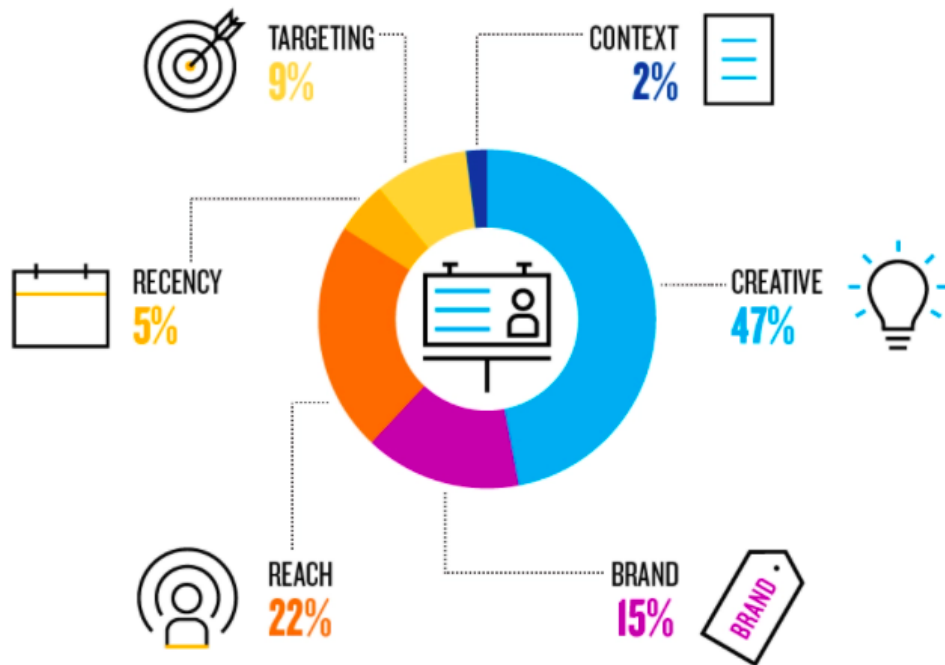
asking themselves if they wish to stay relevant in today's highly digitalized and hyper-competitive environment.

Marketers are presented with a myriad of different channels for advertising, such as social media, out of which the majority are audio-enabled. The role of audio is especially significant on platforms such as Youtube and Tiktok. This means that marketers can effectively incorporate audio into multiple elements of their online marketing communication. The strategic use of audio can not only be of significant help in building a brand identity, but also in positively differentiating a product or service, enhancing recall, building trust, creating preference and, ultimately, increasing sales (Minsky & Fahey, 2014). A significant element of brand identity is brand personality.

In addition to the theoretically argued and empirically proven effects that the right use of music and other auditory elements can have in a marketing context, audio branding also plays a role in a broader perspective of where marketing is heading as a field and practice. According to Teemu Neiglick (2021), the CEO of Omnicom Group Finland, marketing as a practice has, through technological advancements in digital marketing and consumer behavior, changed from mass influencing to being more targeted, personalized, appealing, reactive and measurable in terms of results than ever before (Neiglick, 2021). Neiglick (2021) argues that the utilization of data is becoming more difficult and costly for marketers across the board. This comes, according to Neiglick (2021), as a result of users becoming more aware and demanding regarding how data about them are gathered, handled, shared and utilized for commercial purposes. As a result of this, legislation and regulation concerning data management has accelerated, as the introduction of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) in the European Union in 2018 (Nadeau, 2020) serves as an example of. The basic argument that Neiglick (2021) makes is that when the hype around data and measuring dissipates as a result of reduced utilization opportunities, it forces marketers to focus on the most important factor: how to produce appealing



and influential content for potential customers. The importance of the “creative” is further emphasized by Nielsen’s (2017) report regarding the contribution of each advertising element on sales (see p. 5). This is relevant because the “creative” refers to the actual ad that is served to users and can consist of not only an image or video, but also audio (Google, 2022).



**Figure 1.** *Percent sales contribution by advertising element.* (Nielsen, 2017)

## 1.2. Research gaps

Prior research in the field of audio branding has focused largely on background music in either a physical in-store setting (e.g. Milliman, 1982) or online in e-commerce stores (Ding & Lin, 2012). Music in advertising has also been researched extensively mainly in the context of television commercials (e.g. Park & Young, 1986), and brand personality has been

studied in a myriad of contexts. However, research on the link between the two, namely audio branding and brand personality, has been studied to a much lesser extent. For example, Mas, Bolls, Rodero, Barreda-Àngeles and Churchill (2020) studied the role of specific aspects of audio branding, whilst Ellis, Tinkham and King (2008) as well as Magnini and Thelen (2008) focused on the transmission of brand personality traits. However, none of these studies focused on social media advertising and Generation Z. This thesis relies primarily on Aaker's (1997) seminal research on brand personality, which has also been used in previous research (e.g. Ellis, Tinkham & King, 2008).

Unlike previous research, this thesis focuses specifically on the social media platform Youtube. This platform was chosen for two reasons: it is the most popular social media platform among millennials and Gen Zers (Tankovska, 2021), and it is also a "sound-on" platform with as much as 96% of its users watching videos with the audio turned on (Goodfellow, 2016). In regards to the selection of Generation-Z, the global management consultancy McKinsey & Company estimated in 2019 that Gen Z would account for around 40% of total consumers globally in 2020 (Amed, Balchandani, Beltrami, Berg, Hedrich & Rölkens, 2019), which makes it an interesting and extremely valuable demographic for both marketers and academia to study. Examining the role of different information channels that consumers are exposed to during the customer journey is also becoming increasingly important for marketers (Li, Abbasi, Cheema & Abraham, 2020) in order to make educated, data-led business decisions, which is what this thesis aims to provide aid for.

Furthermore, given the rapid pace of change when it comes to social media and the consumer behavior of Gen Z, which is fueled by the ever-increasing pace at which new digital channels are introduced and interacted through (see Wilson, 2021), this study will add to the field of audio branding research through the chosen perspective.

### 1.3. Research questions and objective

The main objective of this study is to help create a more comprehensive understanding of how, and to what extent, Gen Z consumers perceive brand personality traits elicited by music in advertising on social media, and more precisely Youtube. To support the objective of this study, the following research questions have been formulated:

**RQ1.** What is brand personality, and how can the perception of it be influenced?

**RQ2.** What are the effects of music in marketing communication?

**RQ3.** How does music in Youtube advertising influence perceived brand personality traits from a Generation-Z -perspective?

**RQ4.** What insights can be drawn from the results of this study for marketers targeting Gen-Z consumers?

### 1.4. Research method

Donovan and Henley (2010) argue that qualitative research is designed to explain, identify and explain the individual views of people, whereas quantitative methods mainly measure the commonality of these views. Qualitative research approaches usually focus on gaining an understanding about the thoughts, feelings or individuals' interpretations of certain processes and meanings (Given, 2008). They are also generally applied in the exploration of new phenomena (Given, 2008).

Considering the explorative nature of the thesis, a qualitative research method was deemed as the most fitting approach. Specifically semi-structured

interviews were used as the source of empirical data, which allowed for an in-depth understanding about the topic. The empirical data was analyzed using thematic analysis. Secondary data such as statistics, reports, web pages and blog texts from industry experts and brands were also used for greater depth. Previous relevant academic literature from the fields of interest was utilized widely as the main source of theoretical data.

## 1.5. Terms and definitions

**Audio branding:** The term audio branding is used to describe the process of brand management- and development by the use of audible elements within the framework of brand communication (International Sound Awards, 2020). In essence, audio branding is a tool that companies can use to positively differentiate their brand and facilitate the building of a more emotional relationship between customer and brand. Audio branding measures can include essentially any form of auditory elements used in marketing communication such as jingles, in-store background music, music used in commercials, built-in sounds (think of the iconic Windows-sounds) etc.

**Generation Z (Gen Z):** Generation Z refers to the generation succeeding the millennials. Although there seems to be no exact consensus concerning the exact definition of Generation Z , this thesis uses the definition by Francis and Hoefel (2018) who suggest a range between 1995 and 2010.

**Social media advertising:** According to Dollarhide (2020), social media is online technology that serves to enable the sharing of ideas, information and thoughts through the construction of communities and networks. The most popular social media platforms include Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and

Youtube. Social media advertising includes running paid advertisements on these platforms.

**Brand personality:** The traditional definition of brand personality is the set of human characteristics associated with a brand (Aaker, 1997).

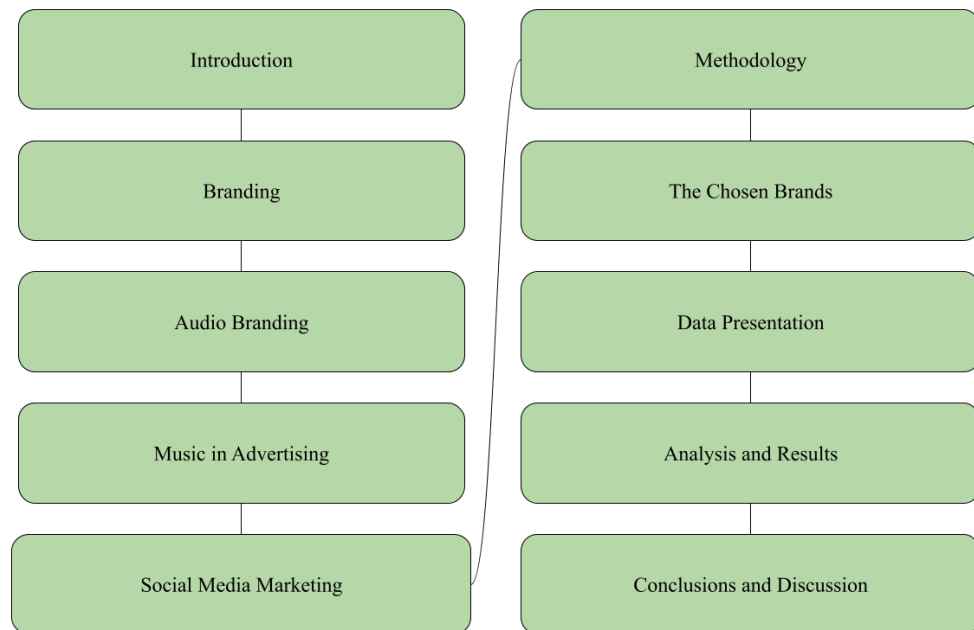
## 1.6. Limitations and delimitations

In terms of empirical limitations, this thesis is demographically and geographically confined to exploring the views and experiences of people belonging to Generation Z, i.e. people born between the years 1995-2010, who are residing in Finland. In terms of theoretical data, this thesis explores the fields of branding, audio branding and social media marketing from various perspectives. However, as branding constitutes a tremendously large area in itself, this thesis is limited to exploring mainly the concepts of brand identity and brand personality. In terms of audio branding, the research areas reviewed are mainly related to background music and music in advertising. Furthermore, this thesis limits itself to exploring the influence of audio branding on perceived brand personality in a digital environment, and more specifically on the social media platform Youtube. Moreover, this study is limited to studying the transmission of brand personality traits in paid video advertising for five specific brands (Finnair, Nike, Audi, Lego and Coca-Cola).

## 1.7. Disposition

The introductory chapter of this thesis presents the background, problem, research gap as well as main aims and questions. Additionally, it holds a list of definitions concerning the most central and relevant terms in this thesis. A

brief description of the chosen research methodology, limitations and delimitations are also presented in this chapter. Chapters 2, 3,4 and 5 constitute the literature review. Succeeding the literature review is the methodology chapter, in which central areas such as the chosen research method, research design and sampling are presented. Further on, the thesis continues with a presentation of empirical data, followed by a chapter disclosing the analysis of this data. Ultimately, the final chapter presents conclusions, managerial implications and limitations of the thesis and its results, as well as highlights areas in need of future research.



**Figure 2.** *Thesis disposition.*

## 1.8. Summary

This chapter presented an introduction to the thesis and argued for its place in existing research. It continued by providing an explicit review of the research gap and questions which this thesis aims to answer, as well as the motivations behind them. Furthermore, a brief overview of the research method and key terms were provided. The chapter was concluded with a presentation of the specific limitations and delimitations that the study is subject to, as well as the disposition.

## 2. Branding

This chapter presents the key definitions and elements of branding, whilst focusing on the main dimension of this thesis: brand personality. The chapter is concluded with a review of social media as a branding tool.

### 2.1. Definitions and elements of branding

The term ‘brand’ is often referred to in different contexts, but there seems to be significant ambiguity regarding its exact definition. Traditionally, a brand, as defined by the American Marketing Association (1960, as cited in Maurya & Mishra, 2012, p. 123), is characterized as “a name, term, design, symbol, or a combination of them, intended to identify the goods or services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from competitors”. Even though this definition is accurate, it is a rather pragmatic approach to the term. Hence, researchers and practitioners alike have sought to bring clarity to the meaning of this oft-cited term. For example, De Chernatony and McDonald (1992, as cited in Rowley, 2004, p. 132) argue that a brand is “an identifiable product augmented in such a way that the buyer or user perceives relevant unique added values which match their needs most closely. Furthermore, its success results from being able to sustain these added values in the face of competition”. In turn, the practice of branding is defined by Vaid (2003, p. 12) as “the process by which a company, a product name, or an image becomes synonymous with a set of values, aspirations, or states, such as “youth, “independence”, “trustworthiness”, “quality”, or “performance”. Based on these definitions, it is safe to argue in a summarizing sense that a brand is not just a name, logo or symbol, but rather a holistic package that signals to the consumer what values the product, service, or the maker of them, stands for.

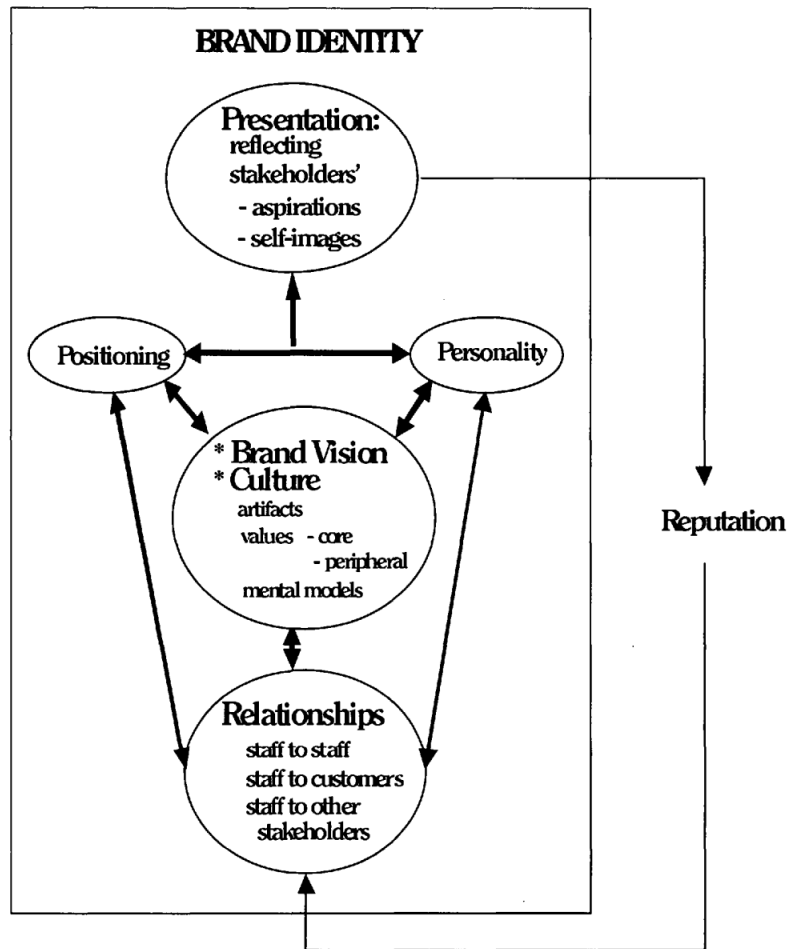


Despite the fact that branding is, as previously mentioned, a rather loosely used term especially in casual conversations, it is in reality a very broad and multifaceted concept. It includes a myriad of different sub-fields and dimensions, one of which is brand identity.

## 2.2. Brand identity

To understand the key concept of this thesis, namely brand personality, it is essential to first understand what brand identity is. The concept of brand identity encompasses all elements that make the brand unique and meaningful (Janonis, Dovalienė & Virvilaitė, 2007). Breaking the term down further, Ghodeswar (2008, p. 5) defines it as “a unique set of brand associations implying a promise to customers and includes a core and extended identity”. Ghodeswar (2008) explains that the core identity is the enduring and predominant part of the brand which remains stable even as the brand shifts to other markets or products. Hence, it specifically encompasses various product attributes, service, product performance, ambient aspects of the store as well as the profile of its users (Ghodeswar, 2008). However, Ghodeswar (2008) argues that the extended brand identity as something that is constructed around various elements of brand identity, organized into cohesive groups and providing brand texture. This extended identity focuses, as argued by Ghodeswar (2008), on strong symbol association, relationship and brand personality.

Looking more closely at the elements that constitute a brand's identity, De Chernatony (1999) argues that it consists of six elements: vision, culture, positioning, personality, relationship and presentation. Based on the reviewing of these individual components, De Chernatony (1999) presents a practical sequence of steps for defining a brand's identity.



**Figure 3.** *Elements of Brand Identity.* (De Chernatony, 1999)

The first element to review is the brand's vision. De Chernatony (1999) states that a brand needs a clearly formulated and defined vision to guide it in order for the brand to thrive. In order to develop a strategy for moving towards the formulated vision, De Chernatony (1999) argues that the next course of action is to carry out an audit of the brand's culture. This audit demonstrates the fitness of the culture to facilitate the vision. Having completed this step, the next task is to contemplate the desired positioning of the brand with regard to how it fits the brand's vision and core values (De Chernatony, 1999). De Chernatony (1999) argues that this positioning is reinforced by various artefacts, which signal to the key stakeholders about the brand's performance

characteristics. The next task in the sequence of defining brand identity is to look at brand personality (De Chernatony, 1999). According to De Chernatony (1999), the previously reviewed core values influence, in addition to the brand's functional domain, its personality. Brand personality, among other things, reduces the rate of, and need for, information search and processing by showcasing the values of the brand through the personality metaphor (Aaker, 1997, as cited in De Chernatony, 1999, p. 168). Moving on in the sequence, the next step is to consider the various relationships that are formed, as well as their appropriateness with regard to the brand's core values and personality (De Chernatony, 1999). These relationships can be between employees and other employees, employees and customers, or employees and other potential stakeholders (De Chernatony, 1999). The final component of brand identity to be reviewed is, as argued by De Chernatony (1999), the matter of the brand's presentation. Considering how to present the brand to stakeholders, De Chernatony (1999) identifies the fact that different stakeholder groups may have different points of contact with the brand, and that there hence may be potential for communicating contradicting messages. In a further elaboration concerning the symbolic meaning of a brand, De Chernatony (1999) states that it is not simply furthered by advertising, but also by the interaction of customers, employees and other brand users.

As mentioned previously, brand personality constitutes a large part of brand identity. The concept of brand personality is also the main focus of this thesis with regard to the larger context of branding, and will hence be reviewed in further detail in the following sub-chapter.

### 2.3. Brand personality

Aaker (1997) defines brand personality simply as the set of human characteristics associated with a brand. Another definition, as put forward by

Phau and Lau (2000, p. 52), is that brands are perceived to have personalities which consumers “use as an avenue for self-expression or to experience the emotional benefits by which the brand differentiates itself from others”. In turn, Fournier (1998) comes at the topic from a brand-consumer relationship viewpoint, stressing the importance of seeing brands not only as static but active and contributing members of the relationship between the two, and that one way to legitimize this relationship is to underline ways in which brands humanized, animated or otherwise personified.

To exemplify the term from a practical standpoint, Aaker (1997) refers to two well-established spirits brands, Absolut and Stolichnaya, arguing that the first one is personified as a hip, cool and contemporary 25-year-old, and the latter as a conservative, intellectual older man. Further examples of brands with distinctly associated personality traits include Coca-Cola, which is viewed as all-american, cool and real, and Pepsi which is, in turn, more young, fashionable and exciting (Aaker, 1997). Brand identity has been proven to contribute significantly to the establishment of brand loyalty and the creation of favourable views towards a brand, as well as increasing brand equity (Seimiene & Kamarauskaite, 2014), which has made it a topic of interest for both practitioners and academics (Geuens, Weijters & De Wulf, 2009).

According to Mälar, Krohmer, Hoyer and Nyffenegger (2011), creating an emotional attachment to the brand is one of the key things in modern marketing, and that one way of doing this is to try to match the brand’s identity with the consumer’s own self. Regarding whether it is the consumer’s actual self or ideal self that determines the level of brand attachment, Mälar et al. (2011) found, on a general level, actual self-congruence to have the greatest impact. Aaker (1997) argues that the personality traits associated with a brand are transferred onto it directly through the people associated with it. In other words, the personality traits of the people associated with the brand also become representative of the brand itself. On the other hand, personality traits

can also become associated with a brand in an indirect manner through various product-related properties and product category associations, a symbol, a logo, a brand name, style of advertising, pricing or channel of distribution (Aaker, 1997). This traditional view of how brand personality is created is also supported by Maehle and Supphellen (2011), who argue that one avenue for the transmission of personality traits is through the people that represent it, i.e. its employees, chief executives or other endorsers.

Furthermore, demographic traits such as gender, age and class, are also argued to be a part of brand identity (Levy, 1959, as cited in Aaker, 1997), as humans are often drawn to thinking of even inanimate objects as either male or female, are sensitive to symbols of age, and recognize that certain products are symbols of higher class (Aaker, 1997). Aaker (1997) elaborates by stating that, in a similar way to personality traits, these demographic qualities are deduced from the brand's user imagery, employees or endorsers, as well as other brand associations. To exemplify this, Aaker (1997) mentions the two tobacco brands Virginia Slims and Marlboro, of which the first one is generally regarded as more feminine, and the latter as more masculine. Another comparison can be drawn between computer companies Apple and IBM, whereof the first one is viewed as younger and the latter as older, which is potentially impacted by the time of their respective market introductions (Aaker, 1997). In terms of class, Saks Fifth Avenue is generally perceived as upper-class whereas Kmart is viewed as blue collar due to their respective pricing approaches (Aaker, 1997).

In an aim to further define the concept of brand identity and to provide a theoretical framework around it to replace the previously used, and rather inaccurate ad hoc scales and personality scales which have remained unverified in the context of brands, Aaker (1997) presents five dimensions (sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication, ruggedness) of brand personality. The table below represents the brand personality scale, as

presented by Aaker (1997). It shows five key brand personality dimensions, the facets of respective dimensions, and the traits most commonly associated with each facet.

<b>Key Dimension</b>	<b>Facet</b>	<b>Trait</b>	
Sincerity	Down-to-earth	Down-to-earth	
		Family-oriented	
		Small-town	
	Honest	Honest	Honest
			Sincere
			Real
			Wholesome
			Original
			Cheerful
	Excitement	Daring	Daring
			Trendy
			Exciting
Spirited		Spirited	Spirited
			Cool
			Young
Imaginative		Imaginative	Imaginative
			Unique
			Up-to-date

Key Dimension	Facet	Trait
		Independent
		Contemporary
Competence	Reliable	Reliable
		Hard-working
		Secure
	Intelligent	Intelligent
		Technical
		Corporate
	Successful	Successful
		Leader
		Confident
Sophistication	Upper class	Upper class
		Glamorous
		Good looking
	Charming	Charming
		Feminine
		Smooth
Ruggedness	Outdoorsy	Outdoorsy
		Masculine
		Western
	Tough	Tough
		Rugged

**Figure 4.** *The Brand Personality Scale.* (Aaker, 1997)

Even though Aaker (1997) acknowledges that some similarities can be drawn between the five brand personality dimensions and the “big five” human personality dimensions, she argues that brand personality dimensions might function differently and influence consumer preferences for differing reasons. Aaker (1997) elaborates by stating that regardless of sincerity, excitement and competence being innate dimensions of human personality, sophistication and ruggedness represent dimensions that people may desire but do not necessarily have.

Regardless of the widespread attention and high adoption rate that Aaker’s (1997) brand personality scale has reached, it has not gone without critique. For example, Azoulay and Kapferer (2003) argue that Aaker’s (1997) scale does not actually measure brand personality, but rather assimilates a multitude of brand identity dimensions, which should be kept separate in both theory and practice. Azoulay and Kapferer (2003) assert that the term ‘brand personality’ has been used all too lightly, also by Aaker (1997), as something that describes everything not product-related, and that since the absolute majority of brand personality research has been based either directly or indirectly on Aaker’s (1997) work after its introduction, it is fundamentally flawed in terms of its conceptual definition and basis. Hence, the main argument that Azoulay and Kapferer (2003) make is that the definition is too broad, and hence may embrace concepts that are beyond brand personality. In terms of the facets of Aaker’s (1997) brand personality scale, Azoulay and Kapferer (2003) criticize competence, femininity, various dimensions of social class and others, as they are poorly reflected in the field of psychology as dimensions of personality.

Providing empirical backup to the argument of Azoulay and Kapferer (2003) is Romaniuk and Ehrenberg (2003), who, in their study drawing on Brand Asset Valuator (BAV) -data collected in the U.K., found that respondents rarely attribute personality traits to brands, and that there are very few



differences between competing brands. In fact, only about 9% of the users of any brand associated it with any personality traits, and the same figure was about 5% for non-users (Romaniuk & Ehrenberg, 2003). However, Romaniuk and Ehrenberg (2003) found that there were still some unique, standout brands such as Bang & Olufsen (50% were for *stylish*), Häagen-Dazs (29% were for *trendy*), and Canada Dry (28% were for *sensuous*), which evoked higher personality responses. A significantly higher response rate was found to be true especially for isolated traits, such as stylishness for Bang & Olufsen (Romaniuk & Ehrenberg, 2003). Quite unsurprisingly, a significant difference was found between users vs. non-users of the brand, as the latter generally provided a lower response rate (Romaniuk & Ehrenberg, 2003).

Despite the criticism from some academics (e.g. Azoulay & Kapferer, 2003; Romaniuk & Ehrenberg, 2003), Aaker's (1997) "Big Five" -scale and definition of brand personality being the set of human characteristics associated with a brand seems to remain, in lack of a better substitute, the most oft-cited even in recent research.

In relation to Aaker's (1997) description of direct and indirect sources of brand personality, Maehle and Supphellen (2011) studied which of these are the most relevant for forming Aaker's (1997) five dimensions of brand personality. For the formation of competence and sincerity, company-level sources such as the company's moral values, the CEO and employees were found to have the greatest impact (Maehle & Supphellen, 2011). On the other hand, typical brand users and endorsers as well as the brand name and logo were found to be more relevant for the ruggedness and sophistication (Maehle & Supphellen, 2011). Finally, excitement was found to stem from a combination of company-level and symbolic sources (Maehle & Supphellen, 2011).

## 2.4. Summary

In this chapter, I started by reviewing the definitions and elements of branding as well as the basis of it all, namely the brand, as viewed by current research. I continued by introducing the concept of brand identity, which is an extremely interesting element of branding especially considering differentiation in a hyper-competitive environment, which is what companies are increasingly forced to operate in. Subsequently, I reviewed one of the largest sub-categories of brand identity, namely brand personality, which is the main focus point of this thesis. Both classical (e.g. Aaker, 1997) and paradigm-challenging (e.g. Azoulay & Kapferer, 2003; Romaniuk & Ehrenberg, 2003) views were included for a balanced overview.

## 3. Audio branding

This chapter introduces the concept of audio branding. I will start by defining the concept on a broader level, and subsequently dig deeper into previous research in the field. The first sub-chapter contains a review of audio branding in an in-store context, mainly focusing on the use of background music, and the second sub-chapter will review the same field in a digital context.

### 3.1. Audio branding in an in-store environment

Audio branding, also known as sonic branding, acoustic branding and sound branding (Minsky & Fahey, 2014), is branding using music and other forms of sound (Gustafsson, 2015). At present, audio branding literature is, as argued by Gustafsson (2015), heavily focused on the in-store retail perspective, which is what this thesis also aims to alleviate on its part. Furthermore, research of this kind focuses on the use and effects of background music, which is only one, yet widely used, dimension of audio branding. Nevertheless, understanding the basic mechanics of background music, its effects on consumer behavior, how it has been applied and studied in in-store retail contexts, and what the history of the field looks like is important for grasping the larger context of this thesis.

Kotler's (1973) establishment of the term 'atmospherics' in the early 1970s helped lay the groundwork for the field of audio branding by suggesting that different atmospheric properties in a space, including aural ones, impact consumer behavior and purchase probability. In essence, Kotler (1973) argued that consumers respond not only to the tangible product offered, but rather to the entire consumption package, which includes the place where it is bought or consumed, i.e. the atmosphere. Kotler (1973) argued further that the

atmosphere is even, in some cases, more influential in the purchase decision than the product itself. As already outlined, the atmosphere is built up by different sensory cues or properties which may be either intrinsic or constructed into the space by the vendor (Kotler, 1973). These properties can be divided into four main categories according to our four main senses, i.e. visual, aural, olfactory and tactile (Kotler, 1973). The main visual properties of a space that consumers respond to are color, brightness, shapes and sizes, whereas tactile properties include smoothness, softness and temperature. Perhaps most importantly for the context of this thesis, the aural or auditory cues in a space include volume and pitch (Kotler, 1973).

Kotler (1973) identifies at least three ways in which an atmosphere can impact purchase behavior; it can serve as an attention-creating-, message-creating- and/or affect-creating medium. As an attention-creating medium, the atmosphere is, quite self-evidently, used to draw attention and differentiate the establishment from others in the eyes of the consumer through the use of motion, colors and noises (Kotler, 1973). Used as a message-creating medium, the atmosphere is in turn used to communicate certain things about the establishment to customers, such as its intended target group. As an example, if you have ever visited (or even read about since they are an avidly used case example of sensory marketing) an Abercrombie & Fitch store, you would most likely notice right away by different atmospheric cues such as lighting, volume and scent, that the intended target group of the store is probably not middle-aged women, but rather late teenagers to young adults in their early twenties.

Kotler (1973) argues that as an affect-creating medium, the atmosphere can directly evoke visceral reactions in consumers through different atmospheric cues such as sounds, colors and textures, which can work in a similar way to how Pavlov's dog learned to associate the sound of the bell to food, i.e. classical conditioning. To put it more simply, Kotler (1973) argues that people

waltz around carrying a myriad of wants and purchase intentions which do not materialize until situational factors, such as a motivating point-of-sale atmosphere, finally tip the scales and facilitate the transaction. The key takeaway from Kotler's (1973) article is perhaps that we, as consumers and humans, are controlled by our senses, and that by favorably stimulating these senses businesses and marketers can essentially stimulate purchase probability.

Another renowned and foundational piece of research in the field of audio branding is Milliman's (1982) study on the use and effects of background music on consumer behavior in a supermarket setting. More specifically, Milliman (1982) examined the effects of three treatments on customers; no music, slow tempo music and high tempo music. Slow tempo music was defined as 72 beats per minute (BPM) or fewer, and fast tempo music as 94 BPM or more (Milliman, 1982). Milliman's (1982) initial hypothesis was that no music, slow music and fast music would have a significant impact on the pace of in-store traffic flow, daily gross sales volumes and number of shoppers admitting awareness of the background music after exiting the store.

The results of the study revealed that the pace of in-store traffic, i.e. how fast (or slow) customers moved through the space, was significantly slower when slow tempo music was played when compared to fast tempo music (Milliman, 1982). The same effect occurred with no music versus fast music. Furthermore, the study showed that slow tempo music was consistently, and with a significant difference, linked to higher sales volumes and vice versa (Milliman, 1982). Milliman (1982) concluded that these results quite logically followed the results concerning the pace of in-store traffic flow, meaning that shoppers bought more when moving slower through the store. In terms of the shoppers' awareness of the background music, Milliman (1982) concluded that in the context of this study, nothing definite could be said

about the exact levels of awareness, and hence, this implies the possibility of subconscious motivational effects taking place.

Even though Milliman (1982) carefully states that the results of this study should not and can not be generalized too widely, it is evident that the use of auditory elements such as music, which has long been a rule more than an exception in physical retail establishments all around, does have the potential to affect subconscious behavior of shoppers especially in a point-of-sale (POS) environment.

Milliman's (1982) study is further supported by more recent research from Malaysia by Soh, Jayraman, Choo and Kiumarsi (2015). Soh et al. (2015) formulated four hypotheses; that the tempo of background music has a positive impact on the pleasure-, arousal- and duration of stay of consumers, and that the pleasure and arousal evoked by background music tempo have a positive relationship on the duration of store stay. Soh et al. (2015) divided respondents into two groups; one group was subjected to slow tempo music and the other group to fast music tempo. The distinction of slow and fast tempo was made according to Milliman's (1986) study, i.e. that 92 beats per minute (BPM) or faster classifies as 'fast tempo', and 72 BPM or slower is considered 'slow tempo'. In truth, the fast tempo group was given a track of 155 BPM and the slow tempo group 48 BPM in order to make as clear a distinction between the two groups as possible (Soh et al., 2015). Soh et al. (2015) also surveyed respondents based on Mehrabian and Russell's (1974) pleasure-, arousal- and dominance -model, asking them to rate their feelings on a 7-point scale to assess their emotional state, and to fill in the average time spent in a restaurant, supermarket, florist, apparel- or book store per visit.

In total, Soh et al. (2015) received and analyzed data from 177 respondents, and results showed that the tempo of the music seemed to have a significant effect on consumers' emotional state. To be more specific, fast tempo music

increased pleasure- and arousal levels, and, as Milliman's (1982) study from over three decades before proposed, slow tempo music had consumers stay longer in restaurants and supermarkets (Soh et al., 2015).

In addition to different tempos, the effects of different musical genres on consumer behavior have also been researched extensively. For example, Areni and Kim (1993) conducted a study in a downtown wine store, examining the effects of classical versus top-forty music on consumer behavior. The underlying argument for selecting classical music in a wine store context was that both wine and classical music were associated with sophistication, complexity and a higher socio-economic status (Areni & Kim, 1993). The study focused on observing the number and location of shelf items handled, examined and purchased, the total value of the purchased items, the total amount of time spent shopping, and the frequency with which customers consumed items at the site under the two music conditions (Areni & Kim, 1993).

The results concluded that the background music (neither classical nor top-forty) did not evoke any significant effects in terms of amount of shelf items examined, handled or purchased, the on-site sampling frequency or the amount spent in the store (Areni & Kim, 1993). However, Areni and Kim (1993) did find that there was a significant difference in the amount of money shoppers spent when playing classical music in comparison with top-forty music. In other words, classical music influenced consumers in a way that led to them purchasing not greater quantities, but more expensive wines when compared to when top-forty music was playing (Areni & Kim, 1993).

The effects of in-store music on shopping behavior, and more specifically on customers' perception of shopping time and mood, have been further studied by Yalch and Spangenberg (1990). Even though Areni and Kim (1993) did not find any significant differences in the effects of classical versus top-forty

music on the actual shopping time, Yalch and Spangenberg (1990) examined the effects of background versus foreground music on perceived shopping time. Foreground music is, in the context of the study, defined as including original artists and lyrics in contrast to background music, which is instrumental and made by studio musicians (Yalch & Spangenberg, 1990).

The experiment was conducted in a department store with two adjacent departments that catered to two distinct age groups; one significantly younger and one older (Yalch & Spangenberg, 1990). In addition to varying the music in terms of background- and foreground music, Yalch and Spangenberg (1990) also used a no-music condition to assess the effect of any music at all on mood and perceived shopping time. The underlying predictions or hypotheses were that foreground music would produce a more positive effect on mood when compared to background music, and that either one would be better than no music at all (Yalch & Spangenberg, 1990). In terms of perceived shopping time, the hypothesis was that foreground music would, thanks to its relatively distracting nature compared to background music, result in customers perceiving their shopping time to be longer (Yalch & Spangenberg, 1990). Yalch and Spangenberg (1990) also made a distinction between leisurely and purposeful shoppers, and hypothesized that any mood effects would be more important to leisurely shoppers, and that time effects would, in turn, have more of an impact on purposeful shoppers. Foreground music was also thought by Yalch and Spangenberg (1990) to evoke more of a reaction among young shoppers, and vice versa.

The results from the study by Yalch and Spangenberg (1990) showed that shoppers of all ages up to 50 tended to respond better to foreground music when compared to background music. However, there was a dip in the liking of that music type for shoppers aged 50 and over, and salespersons from the two departments confirmed receiving complaints from older customers about the obtrusiveness of the foreground music (Yalch & Spangenberg, 1990). In



terms of perceived shopping time, the results revealed, in contrast to earlier predictions, that younger shoppers reported spending more time than planned when exposed to background music, and that the same effect took place in the case of older shoppers and foreground music (Yalch & Spangenberg, 1990).

Furthermore, results showed that background music seemed to have a more positive effect on unplanned purchases (i.e. shoppers made more of them) and negative effect on having an active mood (Yalch & Spangenberg, 1990). Another interesting finding was that customers reported spending less time shopping when exposed to the type of music they usually listen to (Yalch & Spangenberg, 1990). To be more specific, Yalch and Spangenberg (1990) assumed, for the context of the study, that younger consumers preferred foreground music to background music, and vice versa. As an explanation for this phenomenon, Yalch and Spangenberg (1990) proposed two possible alternatives; the first being that consumers, when exposed to a non-typical environment, i.e. a space where a more unfamiliar type of music was playing, pay more attention to their surroundings and what is happening. The second possible explanation was that shoppers simply adjusted their shopping time based on what type of music was played (Yalch & Spangenberg, 1990). However, perhaps one of the key things that this field study helped establish was that shoppers in fact do respond psychologically and behaviorally to different atmospheric cues such as music even though they might not do so consciously (Yalch and Spangenberg, 1990).

### 3.2. Audio branding in a digital environment

Audio branding in the form of background music has also been studied outside of the physical, in-store retail environment. The research of Wang, Baker, Wakefield and Wakefield (2017) concerning the effects of music on retail websites aimed to bring clarity to this rather ambiguous field by

examining consumer behavior on two, real-life web pages. By applying Mehrabian and Russells (1974) oft-cited S-O-R (stimulus-organism-response) model and PAD (pleasure, arousal & dominance) -framework, Wang et al. (2017) hypothesized that consumers will experience higher levels of arousal and pleasure on the retail website with congruent music compared to the no-music condition. Furthermore, Wang et al. (2017) also predicted that consumers' arousal and pleasure is positively related to perceived enjoyment, that consumers will perceive higher levels of usefulness on the site with music when compared to no music, and that greater arousal-, enjoyment-, pleasure- and perceived usefulness on the website will lead to greater intentions to use the site.

The chosen research method was similar to other studies concerning online customer experience, i.e. that subjects were instructed to navigate to a certain travel website, and go through the customer journey in order to buy specified product or service, however without finalizing the transaction (Wang et al., 2017). Subjects were undergraduate and graduate students, and they were randomly assigned to one of the two websites (Wang et al., 2017). As Wang et al. (2017) state, background music is often used to influence consumers' moods or experiences, but it is quite seldom found on websites. Nevertheless, the study by Wang et al. (2017) did in fact show that congruent music on a website's homepage elicited positive affect among consumers, and that when compared to an identical website without music, these significant affective responses were responsible for increasing levels of enjoyment and directly influencing favorable behavior on the site, such as returning to it and recommending it. Background music was also found to elicit a direct positive cognitive response on perceived level of usefulness, i.e. that websites with music were regarded by consumers as more useful than those without music (Wang et al., 2017).

Wang et al. (2017) further found that usefulness was, in turn, linked to favorable website intentions (Wang et al., 2017). However, Wang et al. (2017) stress the fact that individual differences may influence the model's paths, and that identifying such group-specific effects is important for building an understanding about who is likely to respond favorably to musical input and for whom it might have adverse effects. Furthermore, in this particular study, Wang et al. (2017) found that congruent music generated better cognitive and affective responses among males than females, and that individuals with a higher perception of their web skills tended to experience more website enjoyment as a result of the background music in comparison with low-skill individuals.

To summarize, the study by Wang et al. (2017) demonstrated that background music even in an online setting, such as a retail website, tends to produce favorable consumer behavior- and experience, and hence constitutes a valid, yet relatively seldom utilized tool for online marketers and businesses.

Taking an online approach to Milliman's (1982) in-store study regarding the effects of music tempo, Ding and Lin (2012) researched its impact on consumer attitude in an e-commerce environment. The main hypothesis of the study was that background music tempo positively affects consumer arousal (Ding & Lin, 2012). Ding and Lin (2012) argue that because the online market has become extremely competitive, innovation has become the strategy to gain competitive advantages given that price advantages might be unattainable. In a similar way to a physical in-store shopping setting, the online shopping environment is important because a pleasant atmosphere can prompt positive emotions and enhance purchase intention (Ding & Lin, 2012). As previous research has long suggested (e.g. Kotler, 1973), Ding and Lin (2012) also argue that background music is one important means to create such an atmosphere, since music is an invisible language that stimulates inner feelings and emotions and might hence influence consumer behavior. The fact

that background music in fact does have the potential to influence consumer behavior can be backed up by research presented previously in this thesis, so there is no need to second-guess whether the rather careful statement by Ding and Lin (2012) holds water.

Nevertheless, Ding and Lin (2012) examined the effects of background music with product category as a moderator, which brings, in combination with the online-perspective, an interesting and insightful angle to the existing body of research previously described in this thesis. In addition to the previously mentioned primary hypothesis, Ding and Lin (2012) also hypothesized that product category moderates the effect of arousal on pleasure in a way that the positive effect of background music occurs when shopping for hedonic products but not utilitarian. The study was divided into two experiments, and carried out on undergraduate students who were instructed to navigate to one of four fictitious websites consisting of one of the four combinations of fast/slow music and hedonic/utilitarian product categories where they could hear the background music as they shopped (Ding & Lin, 2012). For the first study, video games were selected as hedonic and household appliances as utilitarian products, and for the second study beer and health drinks respectively (Ding & Lin, 2012). Data was gathered through questionnaires.

The results showed significant support for the initial hypotheses with fast music leading to higher arousal than slow music, and the musical stimuli showing signs of influencing consumers' affective responses, as well as product category moderating the effect of arousal on pleasure in a manner producing positive influence only in the case of hedonic products (Ding & Lin, 2012). To summarize, the research by Ding and Lin (2012) demonstrated that background music on websites can indeed create a high-arousal environment to enhance pleasure and purchase intention, but only in the case of hedonic shopping. As proposed by Ding and Lin (2012), background music when shopping for utilitarian products may interfere with evaluating product

information, hence evoking negative responses. Reflecting over the results and arguments by Ding and Lin (2012), it is evident that background music is arguably utilized to a larger extent on e-commerce sites dealing in hedonistic (e.g. fashion) than utilitarian products (e.g. tools).

Building on the research by Wang et al. (2017) and Ding and Lin (2012) among others, Hwang, Oh and Scheinbaum (2020) developed a new research perspective on the utilization of background music on websites. More specifically, Hwang et al. (2020) studied the effects of interactive background music, which is defined as a category of audio media that changes in tempo, mode, texture and volume as a result of user-led actions (Winkler, 2001, as cited in Hwang et al., 2020), which they propose adds a multi-sensory element to marketing and e-commerce. Hwang et al. (2020) argue that the role of musical stimuli has shifted from being simply a heuristic cue to a determining factor in the process of complex decision-making of online consumers, and hence, there is a real need to define consumer groups for interactive background music.

The main aim of the study by Hwang et al. (2020) was to provide insights regarding the effects of applying SETs (sensory-enabling technologies) in an e-commerce setting in the form of investigating its effects on the purchase intentions of low- and high -involvement e-consumers. Hwang et al. (2020) argue that the level of consumer involvement may be especially important in determining the effect of interactive background music on online shoppers, since both musical and interactive stimuli may function as elaborative aids or peripheral cues. To put it simply, the key contribution to the field of sensory marketing was to investigate the moderating effect(s) of interactive music applied on a retail website on consumers' purchase intention (Hwang et al., 2020).

For the purpose of the study, unlike the case of Wang et al. (2017), an e-commerce website was purposefully created and applied with an interactive music technique by the name of soundtrack layering, which includes layering additional tracks of beats or melody on top of an existing piece of music (Fraser & Bradford, 2013, as cited in Hwang et al., 2020). The study was a single-factor experiment with three conditions - no music, static music and interactive music - and participants, although met by the same visual website content, could, in the condition with interactive music, initiate or terminate various effects of soundtrack layering by clicking on different buttons across pages (Hwang et al., 2020). The only difference between the static- and interactive music conditions was the aforementioned ability to control the 'interactivity' of the music (Hwang et al., 2020).

In total, 319 undergraduate students were recruited as subjects, and each was randomly assigned one of the three conditions; no music, static music or interactive music (Hwang et al., 2020). The subjects were then asked to complete a shopping task on the constructed, fictional website selling various leather products ranging from \$20 to \$85, by placing a minimum of three items in their shopping carts (Hwang et al., 2020). Another requisite for successful completion was to have spent at least three minutes on the site (Hwang et al., 2020). Post-experiment, subjects were surveyed about things such as perceived interactivity, experiential value and purchase intention toward the website (Hwang et al., 2020).

The results of the study by Hwang et al. (2020) showed that, in the case of low-involvement consumers, interactive music managed to enhance experiential value compared to the control condition, leading to an increase in degree of purchase intention. In general, as the level of consumer involvement grew, so did purchase intention and elaboration when subjects were exposed to the interactive music condition (Hwang et al., 2020). Even though Hwang et al. (2020) managed to demonstrate this positive effect, they also identify

that the increased cognitive load that comes with an interactive music element on the website can be a detrimental factor for low-involvement users. Nevertheless, Hwang et al. (2020) propose that this potential negative effect can be mitigated through the implementation of e.g. well-designed navigational tools and an overall effective interface design. To summarize the managerial implications, the research by Hwang et al. (2020) proposes that not only static but also interactive musical elements can be effective in terms of creating a unique and favorable online customer experience.

### 3.3. Summary

This chapter started by defining the concept of audio branding. It continued by stating that, despite its multiple facets, the field has concentrated heavily on studying the use and effects of background music especially in physical, in-store environments. In summary, the studies reviewed in this chapter found, among other things, that the tempo of background music has the potential of mediating the pace of in-store traffic flow (Milliman, 1982) and levels of pleasure and arousal among consumers (Soh et al., 2015). Furthermore, the genre and type of background music can influence purchase decisions (Areni & Kim, 1993) and perceived shopping time (Yalch & Spangenberg, 1990).

Subsequently, the chapter moved from the in-store perspective to the online environment. Research was presented concerning the use of background music in e-commerce settings, beginning with a study by Wang et al. (2017) which found that congruent background music on a retail website, when compared to no music, elicited increased levels of enjoyment, perceived usefulness and favorable behavior such as recommending the site to others. Furthermore, research by Ding and Lin (2012), which made a distinction between hedonic and utilitarian shopping, found that the positive effects of background music on consumer behavior, such as higher levels of

pleasure and arousal, only applied when shopping for the former product category. I concluded this subchapter by reviewing a study by Hwang et al. (2020), examining interactive background music in contrast to static music on websites. Hwang et al. (2020) concluded that the former enhanced experiential value which led to increased degrees of purchase intention for low-involvement consumers.



## 4. Music in advertising

Music has been undeniably ubiquitous in advertising especially since the emergence and widespread use of audio-enabled digital channels. Having reviewed the effects of background music from the in-store perspective and its role in creating a favorable retail atmosphere both on- and offline, this chapter presents the effects of music in advertising.

### 4.1. The effects of music in advertising on consumer behavior

Perhaps one of the most oft-cited and pioneering studies concerning the effects of music in advertising (Kellaris & Cox, 1989) is the classical conditioning -approach taken by Gorn (1982). The underlying research question for Gorn's (1982) study was whether factors like humor, sex, color and music, which Gorn (1982) calls 'background features', in advertising only serve to catch or heighten our attention, or if they directly influence our attitudes towards the advertised product. Gorn (1982) hypothesized that, as classical conditioning suggests, positive attitudes towards advertised products may be developed through their association with other stimuli that is reacted to positively in an advertisement.

Gorn (1982) conducted two experiments on undergraduate students. The first experiment had the simple aim of taking a relevant product and advertising it in a favorable or unfavorable way through associating with liked or disliked music (Gorn, 1982). To test this, a sample of undergraduate students were told that an advertising company was trying to figure out what music to use in the commercial for a pen. The pens, i.e. the conditioned stimuli, were light-blue and beige, since these colors had been identified as the most neutral (Gorn,

1982). Furthermore, a one-minute extract from the movie “Grease” was used as the positive unconditioned stimuli, and traditional Indian music as the negative - all as a result of careful assessment (Gorn, 1982). After this, four sets of conditions were constructed (Gorn, 1982):

- 1) Liked music; light-blue pen
- 2) Liked music; beige pen
- 3) Disliked music; light-blue pen
- 4) Disliked music; beige pen

Subjects were then randomly assigned to two classes, which were further divided into two in order to control for any differences between the sections (Gorn, 1982). Under each condition, subjects heard the music as they watched an ad about the pen, after which they were asked to choose which pen they liked the best and why (Gorn, 1982). As a result, 79% of subjects picked the color of pen associated with the ‘liked music’ (Gorn, 1982). Out of the majority of subjects that claimed to have had a specific reason for choosing the color that they did (62%), 91% mentioned color preference as the deciding factor (Gorn, 1982). These subjects also claimed that music had no influence on their choice (Gorn, 1982), which can also be seen to have pointed to the potential subconscious effects of music which have been identified previously in this thesis. More importantly however, Gorn (1982) concluded that the results of the first experiment supported the hypothesis of an association between a product (conditioned stimuli) and stimulus such as music (unconditioned stimuli) having the potential of affecting product preferences.

Gorn’s (1982) rationale and hypothesis behind the second experiment was that the decision-making context is important in determining whether a commercial’s impact is more related to stimuli that can arouse emotion or interest towards product information. Gorn (1982) argues that people are, in most cases, not actively in “decision-making mode” when they get exposed to

an ad, and that in such cases, the impact of the ad is mostly emotional. On the other hand, if a person is, for example, looking to buy a car and then gets exposed to a commercial from a car manufacturer, they are probably more impacted by the product information in the ad (Gorn, 1982).

To test this, Gorn (1982) formulated two conditions; decision making and nondecision-making, as well as scenarios where a light-blue pen was advertised with information, and a beige pen with music. As a result, in the decision-making condition, 71% of subjects chose the light-blue pen which was advertised with information - confirming the initial hypothesis (Gorn, 1982). Furthermore, in the nondecision-making condition, 63% chose the beige pen, which was advertised with music, giving further suggestive credibility to the hypothesis (Gorn, 1982).

To summarize, Gorn (1982) argues, as mentioned earlier, that when an individual is in decision-making mode, the product information provided in a commercial constitutes the largest impact, whilst the classical conditioning of the product paired with unconditioned stimuli, such as music, appears to account for the choice behavior that follows when the person is in nondecision-making mode. Perhaps the most important takeaway from Gorn's (1982) study is that positive emotions generated by background features such as music in ads influence the perception of a product through classical conditioning, and is hence a powerful tool especially in brand advertising.

Another prevalent piece of research in the field is the study by Alpert, Alpert and Maltz (2005) examining the influence of purchase occasion on the role of music in advertising. Alpert et al. (2005) argue that for persuasion, music is a useful tool and hence the underlying "how's" and "why's" are worth researching in depth. Two key factors were at the center of the study; the role of music in determining the emotional message of an ad, as well as the impact of congruence, which was also at the center of the previously reviewed

research by Wang et al. (2017), between the message and its intended emotional meaning that might be communicated through the purchase of the product (Alpert et al., 2005). Alpert et al. (2005) argue that in order to provide possible answers to the previously mentioned “how’s” and “why’s”, structural elements of music, i.e. sound, harmony, melody and rhythm, and their impact on the ad and the product need to be examined in terms of (Alpert et al., 2005):

- 1) Impact on consumer through distinct levels of involvement and affective or cognitive processing
- 2) Impact on consumer’s subjective perception of the music’s fit in relation to the central idea of the advertisement
- 3) The impact of the organization of musical elements on the consumer

Based on previous research and the main aim of the study, Alpert et al. (2005) hypothesized that, all things equal, music with a structural profile perceived as “happy” influences listeners' moods for the positive more than music that had been identified as having a “sad” structure. Furthermore, when the evoked mood is congruent with the mood of the purchase occasion, it would result in higher buying intention compared to when occasion and buyer moods are incongruent (Alpert et al., 2005).

To test these, a sample of undergraduate students were two (music) by two (occasion) study, and asked to assess ads, which contained either happy, sad or no music, in terms of emotions and thoughts that they evoked (Alpert et al., 2005). The results showed support for the initial hypothesis that variations in music structure in ads may produce a significant effect on the emotional responses of an audience (Alpert et al., 2005). Furthermore, music-evoked moods congruent with the purchase situation resulted in increased purchase intention (Alpert et al., 2005).

These findings showcase the importance of not only mood and musical mode, but especially fit between advertised product and music, which is something that has long been recognized by marketing practitioners. As an example, Phillips (2020) who writes for the online music licensing company Songtradr states that one of the most important things to consider when choosing music for an ad is whether it aligns with the brand.

Another particularly interesting and relevant subject area in the context of this thesis concerning has been explored by Allan (2006), who examined the effects of popular music on attention and memory. Allan (2006) argues that attention comes first in the hierarchy of advertising effects, and if an advertisement fails to get the needed attention, its chances of being remembered also diminish. Hence, memory is the next “component” in the sequential causal chain of advertising effects (Thorson, Chi & Leavitt, 1992, as cited in Allan, 2006), which can be seen below.

**FIGURE 1**  
The Hierarchic Models of Advertising Effects

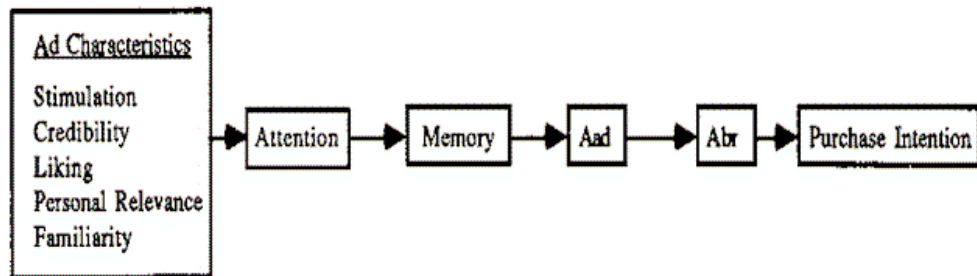


Figure 1a: The Classic Hierarchic Model of Advertising Effects

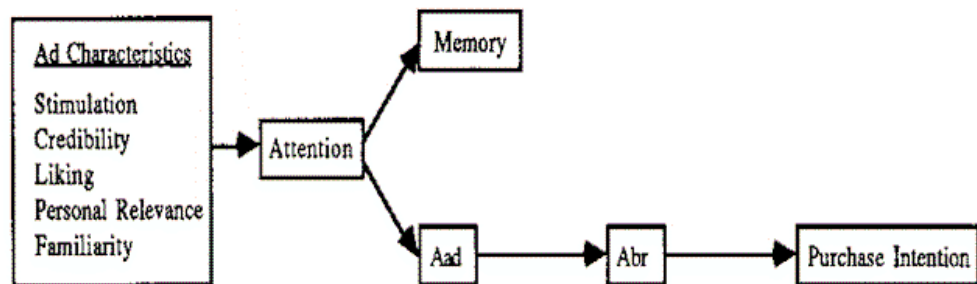


Figure 1b: The Two-Route Hierarchic Model of Advertising Effects

**Figure 5.** *The hierarchic models of advertising effects.* (Thorson, Chi & Leavitt, 1992)

As anyone who has been exposed to TV-advertising in particular would know, pop music is widely used in commercials of all kinds to, among other things, connect on a cultural level with the target audience. As Allan (2006) argues, popular music is used by advertisers to involve, engage and persuade potential customers. Advertisers can incorporate music in a number of different ways; by commissioning fit-to-purpose tracks for a specific ad, using more generic and licenseable stock music, using an existing song or even altering it to fit the ad (Allan, 2006). One relatively recent example of the use of an existing song in an ad was the wave-making truck commercial by Volvo starring actor Jean-Claude Van Damme doing “the epic split” whilst Enya’s “Only Time”

plays in the background (Pandora For Brands, 2020). As an example of altering a pop song, Allan (2006) mentions Ebay's use of Frank Sinatra's famous "My Way" in a commercial, where the lyrics were changed from "my way" to "ebay".

Allan (2006) tested the effects of pop music on memory and attention under three conditions; an ad using an original pop music track with vocals (like the Enya & Volvo-example), an ad using a pop music track with altered vocals (like the Sinatra & Ebay -example), an ad using an instrumental version of an original pop song and a control treatment of an ad using no music at all. Consequently, four hypotheses were formulated: an ad with popular music of high personal significance to the recipient will result in 1) greater attention and 2) greater memory for the brand, and an ad with popular music including original vocals will lead to 3) greater attention and 3) greater memory for the brand (Allan, 2006).

The results showed support for the initial hypotheses, as pop music with original vocals was found to have a more profound effect on attention and memory than other forms of pop music examined (Allan, 2006). Additionally, this effect was more potent when the music was of personal significance to the listener, whereas in the case of low personal significance, tracks with altered vocals were more effective (Allan, 2006). The managerial implications of this could be seen to include the justified need for increased attention towards catering different types of popular music for different advertising purposes. Even though out of the music types examined in this study, popular music with original vocals performed best in terms of effect on attention and memory overall, it does not mean that all other types should be excluded from use. Music with altered vocals or instrumentals can certainly be useful in the advertising of e.g. commodities or more 'technical' products that don't necessarily aim to make a 'cultural impact' in the same manner like a sneaker ad might.

## 4.2. Previous research concerning the influence of music on perceived brand personality

As stated in the introductory chapter, the existing research on the influence of music on perceived brand personality is scarce, but not non-existent. A study by Ellis, Tinkham and King (2008) studied the influence of advertising music on perceived brand personality using Aaker's (1997) brand personality framework. The study used twenty different audio ads, which had five ad claims representing the five brand personality dimensions: sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication, and ruggedness (Ellis, Tinkham & King, 2008). The ad claims were all read aloud in the ads by the same male radio announcer. The subjects, which consisted of undergraduate students, heard five individual ads, which represented the five brand personality dimensions, and were then asked to rate the credibility of the ad claim, as well as which of the brand personality dimensions they felt the brand represented (Ellis, Tinkham & King, 2008). The results found that consumers can, in fact, recognize brand personality dimensions in advertising music (Ellis, Tinkham & King, 2008).

Another study on the influence of music on perceived brand personality was conducted by Magnini and Thelen (2008), who focused on classical music in a restaurant setting. The sample group of undergraduate students were divided into two groups, and instructed to read a restaurant menu (Magnini & Thelen, 2008). After five minutes, a screen was lowered in front of them, and a virtual tour of a restaurant was played (Magnini & Thelen, 2008). The only difference between the two groups was that for one group, the virtual tour was accompanied by classical music, and for the other one, it lacked any music (Magnini & Thelen, 2008). Five personality traits were chosen beforehand from Aaker's (1997) framework which were deemed to best represent a fine dining experience: "reliable", "intelligent", "successful", "upper class",



“charming” (Magnini & Thelen, 2008). The subjects were then given a questionnaire, which asked them to rate each of the pre-chosen brand personality traits on a five-point scale from less to more descriptive (Magnini & Thelen, 2008). The study concluded that the results for four brand personality traits (reliable, successful, upper class, charming) were not significant, but the subjects in the classical music condition rated the restaurant more “intelligent” (Magnini & Thelen, 2008).

The results of these two studies show that perceived brand personality can, in fact, be influenced by music both in advertising and in a physical environment.

### 4.3. Summary

This chapter center around music in advertising by reviewing various studies in the field starting with Gorn (1982), who proposed that positive emotions generated by music in advertising influence the perception of a product through classical conditioning. Furthermore, research by Alpert et al. (2005), who showcased the importance of mood and musical mode as well as congruence between music and advertised product, was presented. The chapter continued with a study by Allan (2006), which examined the effectiveness of different types of popular music in advertising, concluding that tracks with original vocals produced the best results in terms of attention and memory of consumers. Furthermore, two studies about the influence of music on perceived brand personality, both in advertising and in a physical environment, were covered. These two studies both suggest that music, in fact, does have the potential of influencing perceived brand personality. One of the key takeaways from the reviewed research is that there are solid, commercial grounds for using music in advertising, but that the music needs to be congruent with the advertised product or brand in order to be effective.

## 5. Social media marketing

This chapter begins by reviewing the fundamentals of social media marketing, and continues with the media-buying process from an advertiser's point of view. The chapter continues by examining social media as a branding medium, and concludes with a summary.

### 5.1. The fundamentals of social media marketing

Social media is not something many companies can afford to overlook, but rather “an integral part of 21st- century business” (Felix, Rauschnabel & Hinsch, 2017, p. 118). In 2020, over 3.6 billion people used at least one social media platform, and this number is expected to increase to over 4.41 billion by 2025 (Tankovska, 2021). The most popular social media platform globally is Facebook, boasting over 2.6 billion active monthly users (Tankovska, 2021). In the United States, the video sharing platform Youtube is, with 95 per cent of male and 92 per cent of female respondents stating that they use the service, the most popular platform among millennials and Gen Zers (Tankovska, 2021). Furthermore, a recent report by The Influencer Marketing Factory (2021) showed that 97 per cent of Gen Zers, defined in the report as people born between 1997 and 2015, use social media as their top source of shopping inspiration. The same report found that some 40 per cent follow brands they like on social media, and that 62 per cent expect to shop more online when compared to pre-pandemic times (The Influencer Marketing Factory, 2021). From a global standpoint, the adoptance rate of social media platforms in developed countries is still significantly higher than the global average, which is lowered by developing countries, but infrastructure development and increasing availability of cheap mobile devices in lesser

developed digital markets is bound to fuel growth (Tankovska, 2021) and close the gap.

In general, brand or product exposure on social media can be divided into three main categories; organic, earned and paid. Organic, or owned, social media refers to when Brand X uses their own social media profile to communicate with their audience and market their products without paying for it. On the other hand, earned social media refers to when another entity (person, brand, newspaper etc.) posts about Brand X or their product without having been paid to do so, and hence, Brand X has ‘earned’ that media exposure. Paid social media is simply paid advertising on social media, i.e. that Brand X pays for advertising space on a particular social media platform. Hence, it is noteworthy that this thesis focuses on music solely in *paid* video advertising on social media.

Felix et al. (2017) argue that social media marketing objectives for companies include stimulating sales, improving brand image, generating traffic to web destinations such as the company’s website, creating engagement among target audience, and also reducing overall marketing costs. As mentioned in the introduction of this thesis, the digital marketing landscape offers a myriad of effective, highly controllable and cost-efficient ways for marketers to advertise to their target groups. The dominant way of buying ad space in this landscape is real-time bidding (RTB), which is one of the components of programmatic advertising.

## 5.2. The media buying process

Shehu, Nabout and Clement (2020) argue that programmatic advertising is widely popular because of its high degree of automation, flexibility and benefits in terms of costs when compared to traditional ad buying. The principle uses a combination of big data repositories containing data on

millions of internet users and machine learning to determine who the ad should be shown to for best possible result (Alsabeeh & Moghrabi, 2017). Programmatic advertising can be roughly divided into two sub-categories; programmatic direct and RTB (real-time bidding), with the former constituting a direct deal between advertiser and media vendor for ad space, and the latter meaning bidding for single impression in real-time in an auction (Shehu et al., 2020). The aforementioned cost benefits of programmatic stem mainly from the RTB (real-time bidding) principle mentioned earlier, which means that an advertiser only pays when a certain action is performed, and which is also referred to as CPA (cost per action) advertising. Programmatic buying is not exclusive to social media marketing, and is the buying principle for other types of digital marketing as well such as display, native and search (Li, 2019).

Even though there has been a lot of criticism towards programmatic advertising due to its need for large amounts of user data and the use of browser ‘cookies’ to track actions across the web, some argue that it might still be a better alternative for the consumer. The argument is that since programmatic ads are targeted based on factors such as demographics and interests, users will most likely not get exposed to completely irrelevant brands or products. However, as data privacy is a rising concern among consumers and institutions alike, initiatives such as Apple’s ATT (App Tracking Transparency) policy, as mentioned in the introduction of this thesis, are bound to limit the utilization of data for commercial purposes in the future.

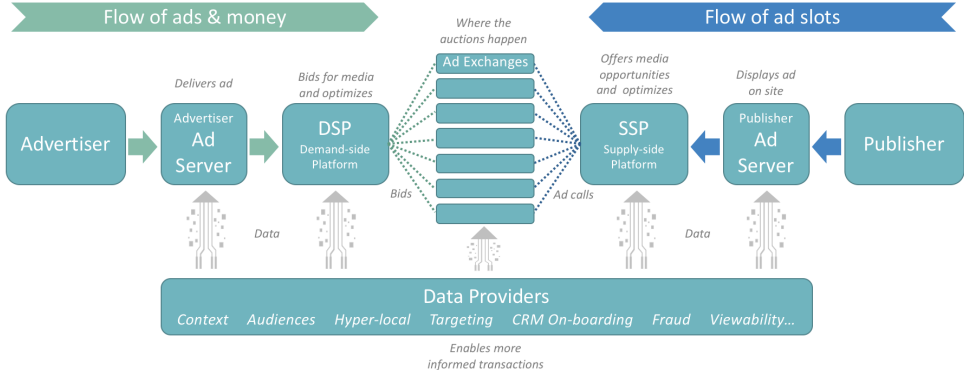


Figure 5. Programmatic advertising flowchart. (Porrás, 2018).

### 5.3. Social media as a branding medium

Given that one of the aims of this study is to develop a deeper understanding of Gen Z consumers’ experiences in relation to audio branding, it is only logical to take a brief look at the larger role of social media as a branding tool. Social media is a way for brands to connect and engage directly with consumers. Yan (2011) argues that the aims for a social media strategy for any brand must serve the organization both internally as well as externally. Yan (2011) elaborates that there is a basic set of procedures and goals that brands should engage in and strive for. These nine fundamentals are divided into actions and outcomes. The former category includes (Yan, 2011);

- 1) Building a sense of membership or citizenship within the organization or brand
- 2) Encouraging communication and acceptance of brand values
- 3) Encouraging audience to engage in dialogue and to promote the brand

Consequently, the potential and desired outcomes of these actions are (Yan, 2011);

- 1) Helping the organization in finding and maintaining competitive advantages
- 2) Communicating and differentiating the brand's vision
- 3) Acting as a tool for verifying whether the brand is properly communicated and understood by the audiences
- 4) Building positive brand associations, perceived quality of the brand as well as awareness of the brand to new audiences

Yan (2011) stresses the fact that brands need to be genuine if they wish to succeed in social networking. This has to do with a brand's tone-of-voice (TOV), i.e. what the brand 'sounds' like. Yan (2011) gives an example about a law firm that can easily be active on Twitter, but might cater its TOV towards its audience by using more formal language and excluding the use of internet acronyms or abbreviations, as well as providing useful and factual information to its followers, hence highlighting its 'personality' coherent with what you might expect from a law firm. An example from the other end of the spectrum is a lifestyle brand selling vitamin water, which might be more playful, organize competitions and raffles to drive engagement and be on-point with internet culture through the use of e.g. memes in its marketing communication. The main point is that brands need to be both coherent and authentic in order for their audiences to engage with them, and social media is an effective tool to communicate this personality. After all, besides the oft-cited, generic and, quite frankly, simplifying definition of a brand by the American Marketing Association (1960, as cited in Wood, 2000, p. 664) being "a name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or a combination of them, intended to identify the goods or services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors", it is also argued that a brand is essentially about the 'who' more than the 'what', or in other words, the

personality. As such, there is nothing ‘special’ about branding on social media from a theoretical standpoint, since the basic goals of branding are the same no matter where the communication takes place even though the medium might present specific challenges. Branding has arguably become even more important in the age of e-commerce where physical interaction is greatly reduced, or even completely abolished with brands that operate solely over the web, and where product qualities have to be captured and distilled in an e-friendly way (Rowley, 2004).

## 5.4. Summary

This chapter started by defining social media, and providing statistics that demonstrate its ubiquity in the modern world. First, a distinction was made between organic, earned and paid social media exposure, of which this thesis focuses on the latter variant. The universal goals of social media marketing, as argued by Felix et al. (2017), were also presented. An introduction to programmatic advertising, RTB (real-time bidding) and PPA (pay-per-action) were also provided, which are essential concepts to understand in order to grasp the larger context of how brands buy advertising space online. The chapter was concluded with a presentation of a general view on social media as a branding tool, which began with nine, fundamental and generic actions and goals for any brand, as argued by Yan (2011). Finally, the importance of a brand’s tone of voice (TOV) and its coherence when communicating on social media, as well as how the fundamentals of branding are the same regardless of through which medium it is executed, was presented.

## 6. Methodology

This chapter presents the research design and chosen method. It also discusses and argues for their suitability, as well as the validity and reliability of the study as a whole.

### 6.1. Research design

As Merriam (2008) states, research design is essentially the roadmap for accomplishing what the researcher has set out to do. Hence, the design is highly dependent on the specific aims set for the study. In the case of this thesis, the aim in terms of empirical research is to study the influence of audio branding on perceived brand personality. To narrow it down, this study focuses on the use of music in paid video advertisements on Youtube, and the perceptions of Gen Zers concerning the key brand personality elements that the music elicits. To study this, a qualitative research approach was deemed most fitting for accomplishing the aforementioned goals. More specifically, semi-structured interviews were chosen as the primary source of empirical data. To explore the influence of audio branding in paid social media advertising on perceived brand personality, a handful of high-profile brands were chosen. These brands were chosen because their brand personality had either been previously studied by academics, or stated in public brand material (namely website). Then, a software enabling the search of paid ads on Youtube was used to source one video ad per brand. This was done to ensure that the video ads used in this study were crafted and used by these brands specifically for paid advertising on Youtube. This was important because paid content can often differ from organic content in terms of content, edit, length or other factors. The criteria for the ad were that it had to be between 15 and 30 seconds long due to being among the most used and effective range (Forno,



2019), and that music played a large role with minimal narration or other distractions.

### 6.1.1. The choice of research method

In the words of Given (2008, p. 29), “qualitative research is designed to explore the human elements of a given topic, where specific methods are used to examine how individuals see and experience the world”. When deciding between a quantitative or qualitative research approach, the latter was deemed more suitable considering the explorative nature of the study, and the arguments by Given (2008) about qualitative methods placing greater emphasis on individual human experiences. Given’s (2008) points are also backed by Donovan and Henley (2010), who argue that qualitative research is designed to explain, identify and explain the individual views of people, whereas quantitative methods mainly measure the commonality of these views. Given (2008) elaborates by stating that qualitative research approaches usually focus on gaining an understanding about the thoughts, feelings or individuals’ interpretations of certain processes and meanings. They are also generally applied in the exploration of new phenomena (Given, 2008).

Considering the specific context and aim of this thesis, although quantitative methods could yield more results and provide an overview about consumers’ attitudes and perceptions, one-on-one interviews were assessed to provide more in-depth information about the subjective experiences of individual respondents. As Creswell (2013) points out, when choosing a qualitative approach the researcher seeks to form the meaning of a certain phenomenon from the perceptions of the participants. This notion is also supported by Bryman and Bell (2011), who state that a qualitative interview emphasizes the interviewee’s point of view, whereas quantitative research focuses more on the researcher’s concerns. Given the research aims of this thesis, the majority of

the interviews were conducted with consumers conforming to the requirements set for this study (Generation Z), but also with an executive from an international advertising agency working closely with various audio branding projects. This was done to gain a broader spectrum of insights from both sides of the market.

### 6.1.2. Semi-structured interviews

On a general note, semi-structured interviews are interviews conducted in a conversational manner with one respondent at a time, and often include a blend of open- and closed-ended questions (Adams, 2015). This allows for the subjects to describe their views in an open way. The questions are oftentimes followed up with specifying or elaborating questions, such as *how* or *why* (Adams, 2015). This method also provides a somewhat standardized framework to follow, which is one reason why it was deemed the most appropriate method for gathering primary empirical data for this study. As Bryman and Bell (2011) suggest, if the researcher sets out with a somewhat defined focus instead of just a general desire to do research on a certain topic, then it is likely that the interview type will lean towards a semi-structured one, which, in turn, provided further support for the aforementioned choice of method. For this purpose, an interview guide was created, but the option to ask questions which might arise based on the respondents thoughts and answers, as argued by Bryman and Bell (2011), was reserved. Nevertheless, as highlighted by Bryman and Bell (2011) as a best practice in semi-structured interviews, the questions were presented and formulated in a similar manner from one interviewee to the next.

Regarding the suitability of semi-structured interviews as a research method, Fetterman (2008) points out that it is of most value when the researcher is familiar with the community through an insider's perspective. Being a

member of Generation Z myself, this also provides further endorsement for this choice of method.

## 6.2. Data collection

In order to take the necessary health precautions imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic, as well as to maximize efficiency, all interviews were initially planned to be conducted via a video conferencing tool such as Microsoft Teams, Zoom or Google Hangouts, depending on the respondents preferences and technical capabilities. The use of such tools has, according to Weller (2017), already become commonplace in social research. In fact, Weller (2017) argue that many believe young people are as likely to share the details of their lives online as in-person due to the commonality of digitally mediated communication. Furthermore, such mediated communication is often associated with informality, which can actually counter the social pressure of a physical, one-on-one interview, resulting in a greater sense of comfort and relaxation for the interviewee (Weller, 2017). However, as the restrictions imposed by the pandemic began to ease, all but two interviews were conducted in person.

From a practical standpoint, the interviews were conducted largely according to the following sequence of introductory steps proposed by McNamara (2009, as cited in Turner, 2010, p. 757):

1. Choose an environment with minimal distractions
2. Explain the purpose of the interview to the interviewee
3. Inform the interviewee about the terms of confidentiality
4. Explain the format of the interview to the interviewee
5. Provide the interviewee with an approximate duration of the interview

6. Inform the interviewee about how they can contact the interviewer after the interview
7. Ask the interviewee if they have any additional questions before beginning the interview

### 6.2.1. Pilot interview

According to Bryman and Bell (2011), conducting pilot interviews can be useful not only for ensuring that the interview questions are formulated well, but also for determining the overall compatibility of the chosen research instrument. For this study, the questions, the chosen advertisements and the overall functioning of the interview concept were tested in a pilot interview. In this case, the interviewee was a person belonging to the study's target group, i.e. Generation Z, which gave added credibility to the post-interview improvement suggestions. The primary improvements that were made based on the interview were aimed to minimize potential bias, such as the randomization of the order that the ads were played to the subjects.

### 6.2.2. The interviews

The subjects were first asked general questions about their familiarity and relationship with each of the brands. They were also asked to describe the brand's personality in their own words. After this, the interviewees were played the audio of the chosen ads, after which they were asked to evaluate them by choosing which of Aakers' (1997) brand personality traits they most associated with the music. If the subjects came up with more than five traits per ad, which was the case with all but one interviewee, they were asked to narrow them down to the five strongest ones. In this way, the results were more comparable. The audio from each of the ads were played in a

randomized order to minimize bias from potentially associating the music with a particular brand. After all brands had been covered, the combinations were revealed, i.e. which audio belonged to which brand. After learning this, the interviewees were asked about the extent to which they thought the music corresponded, or didn't correspond, with the brand in question, how it communicated its brand personality etc. The answers were analyzed and compared to the pre-existing research about the brand personality of each of the brands.

An interview guide was used as a rough framework, but the discussion was kept as free-flowing as possible. All interviews were done in Finnish.

### 6.2.3. Sampling

In the words of Guthrie (2010, p. 53), “sampling is one of the foundations of research methods and design because research design nearly always involves recognition of samples”. Generally speaking, the whole target group of the thesis is referred to as the “universe” or “population”, and the specific group that is studied is the sample (Guthrie, 2010). In the context of this thesis, the universe is Generation-Z and the sample is the group of individuals participating in the interviews. The reason for sampling is a matter of efficiency, since it would be hugely time-consuming and, in most cases, frankly impossible to gather data from all individuals belonging to the universe in question (Guthrie, 2010).

Guthrie (2010) argues that the bigger the sample size, the better it represents the entire population or universe. However, sample sizes for qualitative studies are generally speaking much smaller than those for quantitative studies. Furthermore, considering the fact that this is a master's thesis, the

benchmark for this type of study is around 5-15 interviews, depending on depth.

The sampling method used for this study was snowball sampling. Snowball sampling is a method most commonly used for qualitative research where the researcher approaches a small group of people that are relevant to the study, and uses them to gain access to other people that conform to the same standards (Bryman & Bell, 2011). My professional network allowed me to get access to the initial group of people, and find potential interviewees who could then, in turn, recommend the next person to interview. The method proved to work surprisingly well, and only a few of the recommended people declined to be interviewed. The reason for declining was lack of time in all cases. The table below shows the basic demographic information of the subjects, as well as the date and duration of the interview. All but two interviews were conducted face-to-face.

**Table 1.** Table of interviewees

Date	Gender	Age	Duration
2022/04/06	Male	25	54 minutes
2022/04/08	Male	26	49 minutes
2022/04/08	Female	26	35 minutes
2022/04/10	Male	25	33 minutes
2022/04/10	Female	21	32 minutes
2022/04/14	Male	26	36 minutes

### 6.3. Reliability and validity

Bryman and Bell (2011) mention one set of criteria from quantitative research, which can be used to assess the reliability and validity of a study. In essence, the two primary criteria are authenticity and trustworthiness (Bryman & Bell, 2011), of which the latter is further divided into four sub-criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Bryman & Bell, 2011). As argued by Bryman and Bell (2011), credibility essentially reflects the account of an aspect of a social reality that a researcher arrives at in their study. One central criteria for evaluating credibility is whether the researcher carried out the research according to general good practice. Furthermore, a practice by the name of respondent or member validation, is when the researcher submits the findings to the subjects of the study to receive confirmation about the correct understanding or interpretation of the studied social world (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Another technique related to credibility is triangulation, which includes using more than one method or source of data when studying a certain phenomenon (Bryman & Bell, 2011). In the case of this thesis, this is done through analyzing secondary data from the chosen brands' websites describing their brand personality. As not all of the chosen brands had secondary data available, previous studies researching the personalities of those brands were used. When it comes to transferability, Bryman and Bell (2011) argue that whether the findings of a qualitative study hold in another context is largely an empirical question, and that researchers are instead encouraged to create a rich description of a culture, which can then function as a database of sorts for the evaluation of the findings' transferability. Considering the transferability of the results of this thesis, they are industry-specific, and can only be transferred to similar contexts. Dependability includes keeping record of all phases of the research process, such as selection of participants, formulation of the research problem and so on. In the case of this thesis, documents such as interview transcripts help to ensure the dependability of the study.

Confirmability is, in turn, according to Bryman and Bell (2011), a description of the extent to which the author has acted in good faith, minimizing biases and hindering the potential impact of personal values on the piece of research. When it comes to the authenticity of a study, Guba and Lincoln (1994, as cited in Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 398) suggest that it should be evaluated through five separate criteria: fairness, ontological authenticity, educative authenticity, catalytic authenticity and tactical authenticity. In essence, the fairness of a piece of research concerns the extent to which different viewpoints among members of the social environment have been represented (Bryman & Bell, 2011). In the case of this thesis, it can be stated that in terms of giving equal weight to all opinions and perspectives obtained by interviewees in both groups, I have aimed to attain the highest possible level of fairness. However, the remaining four sub-dimensions of authenticity largely revolve around questions which are more tailored towards research concerning other types of social phenomena, and are thus not as applicable for the context of this thesis.

## 6.4. Data analysis

This thesis followed a grounded theory approach, which provides methodical forms for handling and formatting rich qualitative data (Charmaz & Smith, 2003). As Bryman and Bell (2011) argue, qualitative research quickly generates a hefty amount of data due to its reliance on field notes, documents, or in this case, interview transcripts. This data must then be analyzed in an efficient way to extract any information relevant to the research aims. According to Bryman and Bell (2011), one way of doing so is through thematic analysis, which was chosen for this study. Thematic analysis includes organizing the data by relevant themes, and searching for patterns. During the interviews, notes were taken actively to ensure that no thoughts or remarks were forgotten. The interviews were transcribed, and a time slot to do this shortly after the interview was reserved to ensure maximal recollection. When



reviewing the transcripts, notes were taken again to mark any interesting data points. The data in the transcripts was also coded, which is a significant part of the grounded theory approach (Charmaz & Smith, 2003), and entails marking different data points in language-based data with, for example, a single word or a short phrase that serves as an essence-capturing denotation of its contents (Saldaña, Leavy and Beretvas, 2011), thus facilitating easier analysis. In the case of this thesis, color codes and short phrases were the chosen methods of coding that marked recurring themes in the data.

## 7. The chosen brands

This chapter presents the brands chosen for this study, their pre-studied brand personalities and a short description of the advertisement used in the interviews.

### 7.1. Finnair

Finnair is Finland's largest airline, and also one of the world's oldest airlines that have been in continuous operation since their establishment (Finnair, 2022). The company states *trustworthy, genuine, friendly, optimistic, curious* and *fresh* as their brand attributes (Finnair, 2022) - another term for brand personality traits.

The ad used was a 15-second long bumper ad from August 2021 promoting long-distance destinations with a soothing, subtle and generic piano track in the background.

### 7.2. Nike

Nike is one of the most prestigious and ubiquitous sports brands in the world. Based in Beaverton, Oregon, the company designs, manufactures and sells a vast array of sports apparel, equipment, accessories etc. The brand personality of Nike has been studied by Mustamil, Chung and Ariff (2014), who concluded that the main personality traits the brand was associated with were *imaginative, cheerful, down-to-earth, real, charming, trendy, good-looking* and *friendly*.

The ad used was a 15-second long bumper ad from October 2021 promoting Nike's weather-ready gear with a contemporary, urban, high-to-mid tempo electronic track in the background.

### 7.3. Audi

Audi is one of the world's leading premium car manufacturers. It is considered part of the "German Car Trinity", which consists of Audi, BMW and Mercedes-Benz, and which are regarded as the leading brands in the premium automotive industry as well as fierce competitors. Audi describes itself as *progressive, premium, high-quality, understated, authentic, self-confident, precise and reduced* (Audi, 2022).

The ad used was a 30-second long in-stream ad from August 2021 promoting the Audi skysphere concept with an electronic, dramatic and uplifting instrumental track in the background.

### 7.4. Lego

Lego is the world's largest toy company (Tighe, 2020) most known for its signature product - the interlocking Lego brick. The Danish company describes itself as *imaginative, fun, caring, creative, curious, high-quality* (Lego, 2022).

The ad used was a 20-second long in-stream ad from October 2021 promoting the Lego brand with a made-to-measure version of Queen's "Don't Stop Me Now".

## 7.5. Coca-Cola

Coca-Cola is one of the most recognized brands in the world. The company is famous for its signature, cola-flavored soft drink. A study by Das, Prakash and Khattri (2012) mapped out the brand personality traits most often associated with Coca-Cola, which were *successful, down-to-earth, cheerful, honest, spirited, imaginative, up-to-date, reliable, intelligent, upper class, and charming*.

The ad used was a 15-second long bumper ad from April 2021 promoting Coca-Cola Zero with a looping, electronic, French house track in the background.

## 8. Data presentation

This chapter constitutes the presentation of data, as well as the analysis of it. First, a few general notes about the interviews are presented, followed by a brand-by-brand overview of the interviewees' answers regarding brand personality.

### 8.1. About the interviews

The interviews were held as conversational and free-flowing as possible, while still maintaining the predetermined structure. The feedback from the interviewees was overwhelmingly positive, with many saying that they enjoyed the interactivity of listening to the music in the ads, and getting to select the brand personality traits from Aaker's (1997) framework. For the most part, the subjects were very open and willing to share their thoughts, which made the interviews productive, insightful and stimulating.

### 8.2. Finnair

When subjects were asked to describe Finnair's brand personality, the answers were very consistent with the brand's self-proclaimed attributes. As much as every interviewee said, after learning that the ad played to them was Finnair's, that the music was well aligned with their perception of the brand's personality. One subject mentioned that the music was also consistent with the brand's other auditive elements used in the airplanes, which indicates that consumers are sensitive to coherent audio identities. Many also said that the music was consistent with the feeling that they get when being in the airplane.

A recurring theme when the interviewees were asked to describe the music and how it made them feel, was that it was a “safe choice” but still communicated calmness and reliability above all else.

*“I think it’s boring. Sure, it fits the clean, minimalistic and sort of cozy vibe, but it’s a bit too much “track library” [generic]. It sure doesn’t make me feel excited about going on vacation. But then again, it matches Finnair’s calm and reliable brand.” - Male, 26*

*“If Finnair did something completely different, then it could be a bit weird... On the other hand, it could be kind of nice if they did, but it would be a big challenge for the brand” - Male, 25*

*“It doesn’t elicit any big emotions. But yeah, the trustworthiness, reliability and safety are things that I think about right away.” - Female, 26*

Finnair was also a brand that most of the interviewees had a very strong personal relationship with. It brought back memories, and most of the interviewees were very detailed in their descriptions of the brand.

*“Finnair has always had, or at least it stuck to my mind, a campaign called “Illaksi Kotiin” and all these Christmas commercials... Even like 15 or 20 years ago. I feel like the audio today still gives out a reliable and calm image.” - Male, 25*

The brand attributes used by Finnair to describe itself, as mentioned in the previous chapter, are *trustworthy, genuine, friendly, optimistic, curious* and *fresh* (Finnair, 2022). When the subjects were asked to choose which of the brand personality traits from Aaker’s (1997) framework were best elicited by the music in Finnair’s ad, the most popular ones were *down-to-earth*,

*family-oriented, honest, sincere and friendly.* Other popular traits were *wholesome, sentimental, independent, reliable and confident*, although these received less mentions than the first four.

Although the attributes used by Finnair are not all included in Aaker's (1997) brand personality framework, it is still evident that the five most used traits by the interviewees are well aligned with the brand's intended personality. This indicates that the music used in the ad, when isolated from the visual part, seemed to succeed in eliciting the same brand personality traits as the brand intended.

When asked why the music was successful or unsuccessful in communicating the brand's personality, two factors were most commonly referred to: the piano, and the slow tempo. One subject, who mentioned that he works in advertising, said that he was surprised at how much Finnair's ad, or the music in it, was able to communicate in such a short amount of time.

*"I think that this music, if you think about the brand, is pretty well aligned with the feelings that you get when you're in the airplane."*

- Female, 26

### 8.3. Nike

Nike's brand personality, as determined by Mustamil, Chung and Ariff (2014), is *imaginative, cheerful, down-to-earth, real, charming, trendy, good-looking and friendly.* The five most popular brand personality traits from Aaker's (1997) framework chosen by the interviewees to describe the music in Nike's ad were *cool, young, confident, hard-working and tough.* This indicates that there is, in the case of this particular ad and sample, a discrepancy between Nike's brand personality, as researched by Mustamil, Chung and Ariff (2014),

and the personality traits that the music from the ad elicited. However, it is important to note that Nike is a multifaceted brand, and that this ad is just one of many.

Every interviewee had bought multiple Nike products during their lifetime, and were very familiar with the brand. They had no difficulties describing their perception of the brand's personality. When they were asked to describe their perception of Nike's brand personality, the answers were surprisingly consistent with the traits used to describe the music in the ad. In other words, despite the difference between the results of the brand personality study by Mustamil, Chung and Ariff (2014), how the subjects themselves described Nike's personality and the music in the ad were quite similar.

*“Energetic, young, innovative, colorful, pioneering... They try to associate themselves with top performance... For me, Nike is like a teenage love that I remember with warmth, and I check back with them once in a while, but we don't really stay in touch that much...” - Male, 26*

*“It's quite calm, but active. Pretty hip, cool and modern.” - Female, 21*

*“...on the other hand, it's very ordinary. If they [Nike] were a person, they'd be everyone's friend.” - Female, 26*

When the interviewees were asked why the music was successful or unsuccessful in communicating the brand's personality, tempo was once again one of the most commonly cited reasons. Other than that, subjects had a hard time pinpointing any concrete factors, and instead resorted to describing the “feeling” of the music in terms like active, bold and technical. When they were asked if they would have guessed that this was a Nike ad based on the



music, almost everyone said no. However, every interviewee said that they thought the music was well aligned with Nike's personality.

*"I'd say it fits pretty well. It doesn't remind me of Nike right away, though."* - Female, 21

## 8.4. Audi

Every interviewee was familiar with the brand, but the split between the interviewees who had a very personal relationship with the brand, and those who had a very shallow one, was quite even. The ones who had a closer relationship to the brand were generally speaking more elaborate in their descriptions of it, which was to be expected.

*"I'd say I don't really have a relationship with Audi. It's a nice car among others. I don't really pay any attention to them."* - Female, 21

*"Pretty close [relationship]. I follow what they do and where they're going. I've driven several, and I'd say I'm a fan."* - Male, 25

When the interviewees were asked to describe Audi's brand personality, the majority of answers circled around reliability and elegance in one way or another. It was clear that Audi was regarded as high-quality and upper-class, and one subject even associated it with Swedish-speaking Finns, who are stereotypically seen as more affluent compared to the broader population of Finland. It was also associated with sports like alpine skiing and sailing, which Audi is known to sponsor from time to time. The German trio of high-quality automotives (BMW, Audi and Mercedes-Benz) was also a recurring theme in the interviews, with some expressing a very strong opinion about which brand they preferred.

The traits that Audi uses to describe themselves are *progressive, premium, high-quality, understated, authentic, self-confident, precise* and *reduced* (Audi, 2022). The top five brand personality traits used by the interviewees to describe the music in Audi's ad were *confident, upper-class, reliable, independent* and *leader*. In other words, noticeable similarities could be seen between the intended personality of Audi, and the personality that was communicated through the music in their ad. After the interviewees had learned that the music was from Audi's ad, all of them thought it "made sense". However, even though several subjects described Audi as innovative, one subject said they thought the music was too pompous and futuristic, and didn't quite fit their perception of Audi's personality.

*"Well, I see Audi as, you know, a quality and status brand, but based on that [the music] it seems like it could fly to the moon, and that it's super futuristic, which it may well be, but my perception of it [Audi] is that it's pretty conventional... The music feels a bit overboard" - Female, 26*

In the opinion of many interviewees, the music was fitting to their perception of Audi's personality, but still remained quite impersonal.

*"It's definitely the music of a top-tier brand, but it might as well have been BMW's or Mercedes'... I'd say I don't hear the brand voice in this the same way that I heard it in Coca-Cola's ad." - Male, 26*

*"I didn't get this one. I was able to connect it [to Audi] after seeing the ad, but if I would've just heard this, I wouldn't have thought of Audi." - Male, 26*

When asked why the music elicited the chosen personality traits, the interviewees had a hard time pinpointing any specific musical elements.

Instead, they chose to describe the “feeling” of the music in terms like cinematic, larger-than-life and bombastic, which they associated with the certain degree of sophistication and class that Audi represented to them.

## 8.5. Lego

When asked about Lego, all interviewees had memories from their childhood related to the brand. They described the brand’s personality as cheerful, warm, creative and being “something for everyone”. It was also described as a premium, high-quality brand, as well as being long-lasting.

*“They’re innovative, childish in a good way, warm, safe, and they have a bit of Danish wit. Diverse and fun, and I almost kind of smile every time I think about Lego.” - Male, 25*

*“Play, childhood, colorfulness, resourcefulness, creativity, Denmark, imagination, family, for everyone. There’s a bunch of adjectives. It’s also a bit premium - the products are noticeably expensive. It’s nostalgic to me. If I had to pick one toy brand, it would be Lego.” - Male, 26*

It became clear that Lego was distinguished as the leader in its category in the minds of the interviewees. One subject said that they consider plastic toys as wasteful from a sustainability standpoint, but that she has no problem buying Legos as gifts because they are so long-lasting and classic.

*“It stands the test of time, and it’s practical. It doesn’t feel unnecessary, but like a good choice.” - Female, 21*

According to Lego (2022), the brand is *imaginative, fun, caring, creative, curious, high-quality*. When the interviewees were asked to choose which of Aaker's (1997) brand personality traits they felt were communicated through the music, the five most popular were *cheerful, friendly, exciting, young* and *family-oriented*. Even though there is a similar theme in the personality traits used by Lego about themselves, and the ones used by the subjects to describe the music, a fair share of the interviewees thought that the music wasn't necessarily fitting to their perception of Lego's brand personality. Over half of the interviewees said that they were surprised to learn that the music used was from Lego's ad.

*"I don't feel like it fits. I kind of understand that they're going for a young, playful feeling that you can do anything, but it's just a bit too... It could be a bit more calm. Not a lot, but a little. This is too chaotic. Too hectic."* - Male, 25

*"I'd say that it fits, but I would never have guessed that this is from Lego's ad. It's maybe a bit too much."* - Female, 21

*"It was a bit too daring to put a twist like that on that song... I wouldn't say it's triggering, but it still kind of is."* - Male, 26

The song in Lego's ad was a cover of Queen's "Don't Stop Me Now" -classic, and was immediately recognized by all interviewees. Using such a recognizable song in an ad can, as one subject said, be very risky for a company, as it can be highly polarizing. In the case of all the other brands and their ads, the music was only instrumental, which makes the polarization around Lego's ad interesting.

## 8.6. Coca-Cola

A common theme when interviewees were asked to describe Coca-Cola's brand personality was that it was "ordinary". Even though many described it using words like athletic, young, hip and modern, it was often followed by a "but". It seemed, in the minds of the interviewees, that the brand was trying to be something that it was not quite, and in the words of one interviewee, almost felt "like a cheater". The interviewees referred to a gap between the brand and its advertising, and the unhealthiness of the sugary drink that they produce.

*"A classic. A generalist of some sort. For everyone... I'm sure that they [Coca-Cola] are under a lot of pressure to expand to all kinds of vitamin waters, or to break that unhealthiness. I wouldn't say that it's [the unhealthiness] in the brand, but it's certainly top-of-mind when it comes to the product."* - Male, 26

*"They try to be younger and more fluid, but they're still pretty much stuck in their old habits. It's "meh". It's a challenging brand."* - Male, 25

*"In my mind, if Coca-Cola was a person, they'd be a fat, lazy American who has an addiction to food and drink, and maybe even a bit of depression."* - Male, 26

Coca-Cola's brand personality traits, as studied by Das, Prakash and Khattri (2012) are *successful, down-to-earth, cheerful, honest, spirited, imaginative, up-to-date, reliable, intelligent, upper class, and charming*. When asked to describe the music in the ad through Aaker's (1997) brand personality framework, the five most popular traits were *cheerful, trendy, young, confident and imaginative*. Hence, there were certain similarities in the traits

elicited by the music, and the studied brand personality of the brand itself. This indicates that the music was, in fact, able to communicate a similar personality as the brand had been determined to possess. Interestingly enough, there was a noticeable pattern between the answers of those who had previously signaled that they liked the brand, and those who disliked it, when it came to how the interviewees felt about the music. In general, those who had a liking for Coca-Cola tended to see the connection between the music and the brand better than those who disliked it. They also described the music using more positively both through their choices of traits, and in their general comments, and vice versa. The answers were also surprisingly well aligned with the interviewees initial comments about the brand's personality.

*“Yeah, I'd say it fits pretty well. It has that feeling of wanting to be hip and modern, but still kind of not succeeding at it, and being a bit weird and “out of place” instead.” - Male, 26*

*“It didn't match my perception of the brand at all. I would never have associated it with Coca-Cola. Sure, in retrospect, I could see that in the ad for a new flavor or some product launch, but it doesn't fit that “American essence” that I associate with Coca-Cola.” - Female, 26*

*“I don't really associate it with Coke, because it's cheerful, uplifting and fun, but that's not how I view Coke, probably because I don't use their products. But I can imagine that many people associate the brand with those things, I just don't. I see it more like a classic.” - Female, 21*

## 8.7. Summary

This chapter presented the data gathered for this study through semi-structured interviews. The subjects' responses to questions concerning perceived brand personality were reviewed brand-by-brand. The order in which the questions and responses were presented was largely based on the interview guide.

## 9. Analysis and results

This chapter constitutes an analysis of the data gathered for this study through qualitative interviews. The theoretical framework is utilized to achieve a link between the previous research and this study.

### 9.1. Consumers' perceptions of brand personality

One of the elements of this study was to get an understanding of how Gen-Z consumers perceive the concept of brand personality in the case of five major brands. When looking at the relationship between the brands' personalities, as either determined by previous research or proclaimed by the brands themselves, and the subjects' initial descriptions, there were, in the case of most brands, a recognizable overlap. However, in the case of the brands whose personality was determined through research, namely Nike and Coca-Cola, it is important to note that the samples of those studies did not consist of Gen-Z consumers, which may partially explain why the differences between the subjects' descriptions and the results of those studies were generally more noticeable compared to the other brands. Furthermore, these studies were, in lack of more recent research, from 2012 and 2014. This can also be a potential contributor to the aforementioned differences, because brands have a tendency of evolving over time, and hence, results from those studies may not constitute an accurate representation of the brands today. However, the incorporation of the brand personalities provided by the past research or the brands themselves was done to achieve triangulation, as the most important and relevant part of the study was to compare the subjects' own perceptions with the traits elicited by the music.



The subjects who mentioned that they liked the brand, or had a special relationship to it, tended to be more elaborate in their descriptions of the brand's personality. This phenomenon is congruent with previous research of Romaniuk and Ehrenberg's (2003) study, which found that non-users of a brand had a lower response rate than the users. However, a similar theme could not be recognized when the subjects selected the brand personality traits they felt were best elicited by the music in the ads. It is noteworthy that the subjects were not aware of the brand that the music belonged to when evaluating it.

## 9.2. The advertising music's communication of brand personality traits

In general, the subjects' own descriptions of the brands' personalities were surprisingly consistent with the personality traits from Aaker's (1997) framework that they chose to describe the music in the ad of that brand. This indicates that music in an ad, in the absence of a visual, is capable of eliciting the brand's personality, as also shown in previous research (Ellis, Tinkham & King, 2008; Magnini & Thelen, 2008), and that this is also true for a Gen-Z audience in a Youtube advertising context. Moreover, the results of this study showed that a Gen-Z audience was able to recognize brand personality traits in the advertising music in the complete absence of any visual component, and that this is true for both instrumental songs as well as music with vocals, as both were included in the study. Congruence between the music and the brand was seen as a positive thing and vice versa, as expected. This was well aligned with the results of previous research in the field of audio branding, such as the study by Wang et al. (2017) which showed that congruent background music in an online store elicited positive affect among users when compared to a non-music condition. The importance of congruence was also demonstrated in the research by Alpert et al. (2005), even though the context of the study was

much different to this thesis. Nevertheless, these studies give further credibility to the results of this thesis.

In terms of the studied sample, no generalizable differences in answers were detected based on age or gender, as the sample size was fairly small.

### 9.3. Summary

In summary, there were observable similarities between the traits used by the interviewees to describe the brands' personalities, and which traits they used about the music alone. This indicates that music in an Youtube ad, in the absence of a visual, is capable of eliciting the brand personality traits, and that Gen-Z consumers are sensitive to this. However, the same theme was not as strongly visible when comparing the answers of the subjects and the brand personalities either verified through research or provided by the companies on their websites. It is noteworthy that in the case the brands whose personalities were determined through academic research, they are not necessarily up-to-date, which makes a difference since brands evolve over time. Due to the fact that these studies were conducted a while ago, they did not focus on Generation Z, which also potentially explains the aforementioned difference.

## 10. Conclusions and discussion

This chapter presents the conclusions through a reflection on the initial research questions, and a critical review of the limitations of the study. It also discusses the managerial implications of the study, as well as presents suggestions for further research.

### 9.1. Conclusions

This thesis has explored the influence of music in social media advertising on perceived brand personality from a Generation Z perspective. The study focused on the social media platform Youtube, as it is both the most popular social media platform among Gen Z consumers (Tankovska, 2021), and a platform that hosts content primarily consumed with the sound enabled.

Previous research in the field of audio branding has largely focused on background music in an in-store environment (e.g. Areni & Kim, 1993; Milliman, 1982; Andersson et. al., 2012), which has helped fortify the role of music in marketing. However, the effects of music in advertising on perceived brand personality has not been researched to a similar extent. The few studies in this specific context have however been able to show that music can, in fact, be an effective medium for transmitting brand personality traits (e.g. Ellis, Tinkham & King, 2008; Magnini & Thelen, 2008). By using a qualitative research approach to studying the influence of advertising music in social media advertising on perceived brand personality, this thesis has contributed to the existing field of audio branding research through a novel context.

The results of this study showed noticeable similarities between the perceived brand personality traits, as influenced by the consumers' previous interactions with each brand, and how the consumers' described the music used in each brand's video ad. In other words, this study followed the results of previous research by suggesting that music in social media advertising is, in fact, capable of eliciting a similar brand personality, when isolated from the visual, than communicated through other interactions to a Gen Zer.

Reflecting on the initial research questions presented in the beginning of this thesis, the following is concluded:

**RQ1. What is brand personality, and how can the perception of it be influenced?**

This theoretical question was answered in chapter 2.

**RQ2. What are the effects of music in marketing communication?**

This theoretical question was answered in chapters 3 and 4.

**RQ3. How does music in Youtube advertising influence perceived brand personality traits from a Generation-Z -perspective?**

This empirical question was answered in chapters 8 and 9.

**RQ5. What insights can be drawn from the results of this study for marketers targeting Gen-Z consumers?**

This normative question is answered in chapter 9.3.

## 9.2. Limitations

This thesis is limited to studying the influence of advertising music on perceived brand personality from the perspective of Generation Z, which constitutes a demographic limitation. It is also noteworthy that the sample of the study only included subjects born between 1998 and 1995, which is the older end of Generation Z. Hence, the results of this study are first and foremost reflective of that specific age group. All of the subjects were also residents of Finland, which may entail a special perspective on the brands in this study, and suggest that the results may have been different in another geographical context. Furthermore, the study was limited to Youtube ads, and five specific brands: Finnair, Nike, Audi, Coca-Cola and Lego. Even though these brands are well established and renowned, and represent different industries, the results of this study may not be replicable in the context of other brands.

## 9.3. Managerial implications

The results of this study further amplify the importance of audio, and especially music, in advertising. As this thesis has demonstrated, advertising music, if crafted well, is capable of eliciting specific brand personality traits in consumers. This is important for brands to take into account, as it is directly linked to the effectiveness of their advertising. As seen in this study, if the brand personality traits elicited by the music used in the ad does not match the recipient's perception of the brand's personality, it affects the viewers perception of the brand negatively - at least temporarily. Furthermore, as music is capable of transmitting brand personality traits, it is advisable that brands utilize this medium to communicate the desired brand identity and image.

## 9.4. Suggestions for further research

This thesis has been subject to multiple limitations. Hence, one suggestion is that further research would focus on exploring the same subject in a different context, such as a different social media platform, a different geographical limitation, or a different demographic. This would contribute to the relatively scarce body of research that exists around the effects of music in advertising on perceived brand personality. Future research would both contribute to academia, but also help marketers develop effective audio strategies to reach their audiences with compelling and powerful advertising. Furthermore, studying the concrete effect of advertising with music corresponding to the brand personality of the brand on purchase intention or brand loyalty would also be of immense value.

# 11. Summary in Swedish - svensk sammanfattning

*Musikens inflytande på den upplevda varumärkespersonligheten i reklamer på sociala medier: ett Generation Z perspektiv*

## 10.1. Inledning

Musikens mångsidiga effekter på konsumentbeteende har sedan länge uppmärksamats av både akademiker och marknadsförare. Forskningen har dock fokuserat väldigt starkt på användningen av bakgrundsmusik i fysiska affärer (Gustafsson, 2015). Effekten av musikens tempo (Milliman, 1982) och olika genrer (Areni & Kim, 1993) samt reklamlåtar (Bindea, Seserman, Bara & Iancu, 2009) och ljudlogor (Renard, 2017) är bland de utförligt undersökta områdena inom det som kallas audio branding. Förutom fysiska marknadsplatser används musik naturligtvis mycket aktivt också i reklamer, och i och med den växande digitaliseringen har företagens reklamsatsningar ökat speciellt på sociala medier. Speciellt generation Z använder sociala medier aktivt, och är samtidigt en oerhört viktig målgrupp för många företag. Närmare sagt estimerade konsultföretaget McKinsey (2019) att generation Z stod för ca 40 % av den totala mängden globala konsumenter år 2020. Den populäraste platformen bland Generation Z är Youtube (Tankovska, 2021). I en reklamkontext är den existerande forskningsbasen mycket mindre, och näst intill icke-existerande speciellt då det kommer till kopplingen mellan varumärkespersonlighet och reklammusik. Det har dock bevisats att musiken har en förmåga att påverka konsumenters upplevda varumärkespersonlighet (Ellis, Tinkham & King, 2008; Magnini & Thelen, 2008), men inte speciellt i kontexten av Generation Z och sociala medier.

## 10.2. Syfte och forskningsfrågor

Syftet med denna avhandling är att skapa en ökad förståelse av musikens inflytande på den upplevda varumärkespersonligheten hos konsumenter tillhörande generation Z genom reklamvideor på sociala medier, och närmare sagt Youtube. Utifrån detta syfte har följande forskningsfrågor formulerats, som ämnas besvaras genom denna avhandling:

1. Vad är varumärkespersonlighet, och hur kan upplevelsen av den influeras?
2. Vilka är effekterna av musik i marknadsföring?
3. Hur influerar musiken i Youtube-reklamer den upplevda varumärkespersonligheten ur perspektivet av generation Z?
4. Vilka insikter och lärdomar kan dras från resultaten av denna studie av marknadsförare vars målgrupp är generation Z?

## 10.3. Metod och datainsamling

Utifrån syftet och forskningsfrågorna valdes en kvalitativ forskningsmetod. Närmare sagt fungerade semistrukturerade intervjuer som den primära källan av empiriska data. Den teoretiska referensram bestod av tidigare forskning från de relevanta ämnesområdena, och sekundärdata från bl.a. webbsidor användes också för att bidra till helheten.

Totalt intervjuades sex personer tillhörande generation Z. Dessa deltagare valdes genom snöbollsurval. Personerna tenderade att rekommendera bekanta i samma ålder, vilket resulterade i att deltagarnas födelseår endast varierade



från 1998-1995. I jämförelse anses personer födda mellan 1995 och 2010 tillhöra generation Z (Francis & Hoefel, 2018). Urvalet bestod av 4 män och 2 kvinnor, och de var alla bosatta i Finland, vilket var ett krav för deltagande.

Inför studien valdes fem stycken välkända varumärken från olika branscher: Finnair, Nike, Audi, Coca-Cola och Lego. Sedan togs det fram en Youtube-reklam från varje varumärke som innehöll musik, och som saknade all annan typ av audiomaterial (t.ex. en berättande röst). Musiken från dessa reklamer spelades för intervjuobjekten, varefter det ställdes frågor bl.a. kring den upplevda varumärkespersonligheten. I enlighet med tidigare forskning användes Aakers (1997) ramverk för varumärkespersonlighet som grund för detta. En pilotintervju gjordes för att prova intervjukonceptet, och för att identifiera potentiella förbättringsmöjligheter.

Intervjuerna spelades in som ljudfiler, som sedan transkriberades. Dessa data analyserades sedan med hjälp av tematisk analys. Utgående från forskningsfrågorna skapades en intervjuguide, som användes både för att skapa ett ramverk för diskussionens gång och för att säkerställa att intervjun gynnade syftet med avhandlingen.

## 10.4. Datainsamling och resultat

Sammanfattningsvis fick metoden väldigt god respons från deltagarna, som gillade speciellt intervjukonceptets interaktivitet. Deltagarna var också generellt sagt öppna i sina svar, och diskussionen hölls så fritt flytande som möjligt. Generellt sagt stämde deltagarnas tankar kring vilka varumärkespersonlighetsdrag som de ansåg att bäst beskrev varumärket bra överens med hur de beskrev själva musiken i reklamen. Detta tyder på att musiken i reklamer potentiellt kan, när den isoleras från det visuella, förmedla samma varumärkespersonlighetsdrag som själva varumärket i sin helhet.

Resultaten tyder specifikt på att detta stämmer för konsumenter tillhörande generation Z, och i kontexten av videoreklamer på sociala mediet Youtube.

Trots detta, sågs inte något liknande tema när deltagarnas svar angående deras initiella uppfattningar om varumärkernas personligheter, och informationen från antingen varumärkets webbsida eller från tidigare forskning jämfördes. Detta kan bero på två primära faktorer: att generation Z har en unik syn på personligheterna av dessa varumärken som skiljer sig från samplen i studierna, eller att varumärkenas positionering förändrats med tiden.

Resultaten stämmer överens med tidigare forskning av bl.a. Ellis, Tinkham och King (2008) samt Magnini och Thelen (2008) som visat att musiken kan fungera som ett medel för kommunikering av varumärkespersonlighet.

## 10.5. Diskussion och avslutning

Sammanfattningsvis är resultaten väl i linje med tidigare forskning inom området. Studien bidrar således till den existerande forskningsbasen med färskt resultat från ett perspektivet av generation Z och reklammusik på sociala mediet Youtube. Det är värt att notera att eftersom studiens sampel var begränsat till sex deltagare bosatta i Finland, och endast behandlade fem specifika varumärken, är resultaten inte nödvändigtvis generaliserbara till andra kontexter. Resultaten av denna avhandling tyder dock på att företag kan dra nytta av en koherent och genomtänkt audiostrategi då det kommer till reklamer på sociala medier ifall de riktar marknadsföring till konsumenter tillhörande generation Z.

Som förslag till vidare forskning ges exempelvis en komparativ studie med syftet att jämföra inställningarna av generation Z och generation Y till musik i marknadsföring för att skapa en ökad förståelse av fenomenet i sin helhet. De

konkreta effekterna av reklamer med musik som kommunicerar samma varumärkespersonlighetsdrag som karakteriserar själva varumärket på köpavsikt eller varumärkeslojalitet framförs också som förslag.

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# Appendices

## Appendix 1. Interview guide

This interview guide was crafted with a close focus on the research aims and objectives of this thesis.

### **Questions:**

1. How would you describe your relationship with the brand? Have you ever been a customer, or used the brand's products?
2. How did the music in the ad make you feel? Did any specific emotions arise at all? If yes, what, and if no, why do you think that is?
3. Which of the brand personality traits (Aaker's scale presented to interviewee) did you feel that the music in the ad elicited? Why?
4. Could you describe in what way you felt that the music communicated the brand's personality? Were there any specific characteristics in the music that caused this?
5. Do you have any other comments about the music in the ad, or the ad itself?

### **Sequence of interview:**

1. Introduction to interview
2. The interviewees perception of each brand's personality is mapped
3. The music of an ad is played to the interviewee
4. Questions and discussion
5. Interviewee is presented with the next ad, and the process is repeated
6. All ads and brands are revealed, followed by questions and discussion
7. Interview is done