



**GÖTEBORGS UNIVERSITET
HANDELSHÖGSKOLAN**

Sound Logo Perception
Investigating Consumer Perception of Sonic Brand Logos

Marketing

University of Gothenburg

School of Business, Economics and Law

Henrik Berghe

Georg Södling

Jonathan Peterson

Gothenburg, Sweden

Spring 2021

Supervisor: Benjamin Julien Hartmann, Ph.D.

Abstract

As humans, we are constantly exposed to sounds; whether it is footsteps, birds, the wind or music. As consumers; we are becoming increasingly advertised to, with the development of technology and the introduction of the internet. Sonic branding discusses how marketers may utilize sounds when interacting with consumers to affect their behavior and their perception of a brand. This study investigates consumer perception of three sound logos, used by BMW, Hornbach and Intel. We conduct qualitative, semi-structured interviews with ten respondents, with the intention of recording the emotional responses and associations made when hearing the brand logo. The purpose of the study is to investigate how sound logos are perceived by consumers and how they may affect the perceived brand image. The study utilizes purposive sampling which implies that we have recognized that individuals between the ages of 20 to 30 may be most relevant to our study. We argue that this group is likely to possess adequate emotional awareness to form satisfying answers and interact with communication channels that brands may utilize to advertise. The data collected during the interviews shows that music theory, relatively accurately, is able to predict emotional responses within listeners. It also indicates that previous experiences have a profound effect on the associations made; both in cases where the respondents recognize the sound logos and in cases where they do not. Lastly, we find that knowing which brand utilizes a specific sound logo has an effect on the perception of the logo, but that the sound logo does not affect the perception of a brand. There are, however, exceptions to this; some respondents experienced uncertainty in cases where they did not perceive the sound logo to match their image of a brand.

Key words: Sound perception, Sonic branding, Brand perception, Brand image, Emotions, Association, Sound logo, Touchpoints, Platforms, Imagination, Nostalgia

“You have chosen the most difficult subject to study” - Hartmann 2021

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|-----------|
| 1.0 Introduction | 4 |
| 1.1 An overview of the use of sound in marketing | 5 |
| 1.2 Problem discussion | 7 |
| 1.3 Purpose and research question | 8 |
| 1.4 The outline of the study | 9 |
| 2.0 Theoretical framework | 10 |
| 2.1 Comprehensive theoretical summary | 10 |
| 2.2 Sound and Music | 11 |
| 2.3 Sensory Branding | 12 |
| 2.4 Sonic Branding | 12 |
| 2.4.1 Defining sonic branding | 13 |
| 2.4.2 Strategic sonic branding | 14 |
| 2.4.3 Four characteristics of successful branding | 15 |
| 2.4.4 Platforms and privatization of music consumption | 15 |
| 2.4.5 Imagination and nostalgia. | 16 |
| 2.5 Summary | 18 |
| 3.0 Methodology | 19 |
| 3.1 Overview/Choice of methodology | 19 |
| 3.2 Research methodology and approach | 20 |
| 3.3 Data collection | 20 |
| 3.3.1 Interview structure and guide | 20 |
| 3.3.1.1 Sound 1 - BMW | 21 |
| 3.3.1.2 Sound 2 - Hornbach | 21 |
| 3.3.1.3 Sound 3 – Intel | 21 |
| 3.3.2 Selecting a population to sample | 21 |
| 3.4 Ethical considerations | 22 |
| 3.5 Limitations | 23 |
| 3.6 Methodological criticism | 23 |
| 4.0 Results and analysis | 25 |
| 4.1 BMW | 26 |
| 4.2 Hornbach | 28 |
| 4.3 Intel | 31 |
| 4.4 Comparing the characteristics of the sound logos | 34 |
| 5.0 Discussion | 37 |
| 5.1 Implications for marketers | 37 |
| 5.2 Implications for society | 40 |
| 6.0 Concluding remarks | 41 |

1.0 Introduction

In our daily lives, we are exposed to different sounds practically all the time. Whether it's the sound of the wind, the roaring sound of a Harley-Davidson, or a tv commercial, all sounds affect us in one way or another. Many of the sounds that we are exposed to are there for a reason, which we may, or may not think of - marketing. Perhaps not the sound of the wind, but what about the Harley? In 1994, Harley-Davidson actually filed a sound trademark application (unsuccessfully) for its specific roaring engine sound. This to be able to distance themselves from other motorcycle makers, and to stand out (Smit & Van Wyk n.d.). The Harley-Davidson signature sound is an example of sonic branding most people would not think twice about being branding. But in fact, it is. Sonic branding is a concept in the marketing world that might, to most people, not be the first thing that comes to mind when they think of branding. But for many companies and businesses, we argue sonic branding is just as important as visual branding, which may be more well-known. According to Jackson (2003), sonic branding is defined as branding with sound, and can, for example, be used as a marketing strategy to help consumers associate a specific sound to a specific brand, and to enhance the brand experience. It can also, according to more recent studies, be a vital tool for enhancing the consumer and triggering memories reminding consumers of the brand (Gustafsson 2019).

From a sonic branding perspective, a brand's audience can be anywhere where there is access to communication through sound (Jackson 2003), like in the car listening to the radio, at the phone, at the cinema watching the pre-movie commercials, or waiting for telephone support, where hold music is played. According to Bull (2007), even a church with church bells can be considered an example of sonic branding. Because of technical advancements and the emergence of new ways in which consumers are exposed to sound, the use of sonic marketing has become much more complex. As social media and the internet may imply a wider reach at the same time as markers, arguably have to consider including the consumer as a co-creator through the use of platforms. The latter is a term introduced by Gustafsson (2019) and will be used and discussed continuously through the study (Gustafsson 2019). All in all, there is still not much research on this subject and the perspectives, of both consumers and producers, are still relatively unknown (Gustafsson 2015).

The main reason we chose this specific research field is because it is still relatively unexplored. It seemed like an interesting subject, and we thought it would be fun to be able to contribute to the field. Furthermore, we are all interested in music - both listening and playing, and we thought it would be fun to analyze a subject that we are already, in a way, invested in, and to be able to combine an interest of ours with the marketing field.

1.1 An overview of the use of sound in marketing

Sonic branding is a broad concept and there are several different ways in which sound has been used in marketing purposes throughout the years. The ranging use of sounds includes anything from a song used in a tv commercial, to more unconventional uses, such as the Harley-Davidson example presented above. Since the idea of sonic branding was only introduced in the early 00's (see Jackson 2003), combined with the idea of it being too complex of a field, not much literature has been published since (Gustafsson 2015). But the field is a growing trend in the marketing spectrum, has been for some time, and is not likely going to stop anytime soon (Gustafsson 2019).

One of the first things that might come to mind for many people when hearing about sonic branding, is jingles. A jingle is a short tune or song used to advertise a specific business or product. They are usually written for a specific advertisement and can be instrumental or have lyrics that explain what is being advertised. It is also common to use existing melodies with changed lyrics that are fitted to the advertised business or product (Jingel n.d.). The jingle as a marketing concept might feel dated and kind of old fashioned to many people, but according to a study done in 2012 by the University of Vienna, 89 percent of the responding consumers considered jingles to be an effective way of marketing (Karailievová 2012). Good examples of famous and successful jingles are the McDonald's "I'm Lovin' It" song or Chili's "Baby Back Ribs". It is also common to use already existing songs in commercials. Usually, songs that can be interpreted as matching the advertised business or product is chosen (Gilliland 2018). A good example of this is when Microsoft used the Rolling Stones song "Start Me Up" for a Windows 95 commercial. It can be smart to use an already famous song to bring further visibility to the commercial, but it can also be the other way around. There are quite a few examples of when a song has found renewed success after being used in a commercial.

Another common way to use sound branding is through a sound logo. A sound logo is a short distinctive sound and is used in many different ways. They can (like the jingle), be used in commercials, but also when using a specific product or service. They are usually accompanied by a visual logo (Jackson 2003). The McDonald's "I'm Lovin' It" song is, again, a good example, as it is practically both a jingle and a sound logo. Other good examples include the "Ta-Dum" sound that is played when opening Netflix, various computer startup sounds and brand-specific ringtones. Jingles and sound logos can arguably be used in several different ways, and to bring forth different moods and emotions among the consumers. This is something that we will explore and discuss later in the study.

The use of sounds, and especially music, in physical retail spaces is another way of sonic branding that many people might not realise is for a reason (except that it's just pleasant). Donovan and Rossiter (1982) write that different types of music can be played to stimulate the pleasure and arousal parts of the brain, causing the consumers to behave in different ways, and that this can be used by store owners to trigger different types of shopping behaviours. According to Milliman (1982), the tempo of the music played is of especially great importance. He writes that more uptempo music makes the consumers move through the store faster, and

might end up buying less, while more downtempo music makes the consumers move more slowly, which makes them stay in the store longer, and they might eventually end up buying more.

In a more recent study conducted by Gustafsson (2019), a new perspective, regarding in what ways marketers can utilize sound by focusing on managing a “relationship” between sound and consumer, was introduced to the field of sonic marketing . This, which is also presented and discussed in detail in the theory part of this study, basically means shifting focus from the sound itself to a more consumer oriented focus. The sonic branding field has since the beginning been strongly influenced by branding theory (Gustafsson 2019), which often focuses on strategically managing and creating brands (Holt 2004). From a sonic branding perspective, this means managing sound so that the mediated sound is in line with the brand image (Jackson 2003). This perspective, argues Gustafsson (2019), results in little room for analysing sounds from a consumer perspective since focus is mainly from a marketer's perspective. Marketers, instead, need to acknowledge and take into account that all consumers are different and probably have unique experiences leading to different associations when exposed to a sound. Thus, leading us to the conclusion that the managing of sound, in order to mediate a certain image, arguably becomes impossible since all customers have different experiences with the sound or genre. Therefore, the traditional view, based on classical sonic branding theory (referred to as strategic sonic branding), arguably becomes less important (Gustafsson 2019). The alternative solution suggested, is as mentioned, to focus on the consumer, so that when exposed to a sound, associations are made towards the brand. This partly contradicting view, differs from the previous in the sense that it's shifting from managing the sound, to focusing on consumer relations through platforms (Gustafsson 2019). The latter being an important term further discussed and defined below.

From a different concluding view, it is of value to know that the sound type or tune also plays an important role in how we as consumers perceive and interpret different sounds or music. Jackson (2003) argues, some sounds will grab our attention more than others, and this is something that happens subconsciously. Especially sounds like crying, screaming or the sound of sirens - sounds that generally mean that something is wrong. This brain - sound relationship is precisely what sonic branding is trying to harness. When we hear a specific sound logo, jingle, etc., our brain will tell us to react in a specific way, depending on the sound. Through sonic branding, it is possible to use the human subconsciousness to design emotional messages (Jackson 2003). A good example of this is Intel's classic sound logo. It is a simple, melody driven sound that gets stuck on the brain. It is also written in a major scale, which automatically sends positive vibes to the brain (Music Theory Academy n.d.) Further, Jackson (2003) writes that sonic branding might be our most effective branding tool, and that the sonic stimuli is more powerful than the visual stimuli. For example, more people will probably be aroused by a live concert than by an art exhibition.

1.2 Problem discussion

Today, consumers are more than ever exposed and affected by different sounds and music. New technologies have made it possible for the consumer to carry music and sounds around and, in some sense, control what she wants to be exposed to (Bull 2007). This, what Gustafsson (2015) calls a privatization of music marketing, has changed the extent in which marketers can utilize music to influence the consumer. Looking back to the mid 00s the iPod was launched and revolutionized the way in which we listen and consume music today (Bull 2007). Since, music streaming services have evolved rapidly besides technological advancements today, arguably, everyone can listen to practically all the recorded music in the world, anytime.

From this perspective Sonic branding, not only becomes interesting from an academic view but also for marketers wanting to take advantage of the present situation and utilize sound in their marketing strategy. But even as companies increasingly show interest towards using sonic branding (Gustafsson 2015) and the field has generally been considered ‘the next big thing’ in branding and marketing literature for about a decade, relatively little research has been conducted on the subject.

Until recently, most studies, like Jackson (2003) and Milliman (1982), argued that the primary focus of sonic branding should be the management of the sound itself. That is, marketers should use scale, tempo, pitch, volume and type of instrumentation, to alter or generate a specific behavior – often the likeliness of the consumer making a purchase. Sounds used in commercials and/or stores are examples of these “classic” ways in which marketers use specific sounds to generate buying intent. From this perspective, a central aspect is the creation of, and managing of locations and/or objects through which sound can reach the consumer. These locations or objects are referred to and defined in the literature as touchpoints where the brand can “touch” the consumer with varying sounds.

A more recent and partly contradicting view on the sonic branding field was, as discussed above, published by Gustafsson (2019). She writes about a shift from the earlier perspective of managing the sound to instead focusing on consumer relations through platforms that could prove useful from a managing view. A platform is here defined as an outlet of either sound or music in some way managed by a brand. Outlets in turn are cultural objects, locations, or buildings that, in some way, are associated with either sound or music. Compared to the earlier touchpoint metaphor. This new perspective focuses on the creating and managing of sounds so that in turn the consumer can build a relationship with the brand through sound. In other words, as earlier sonic branding literature focuses on using sound to increase the likelihood of the consumer making a purchase, a platform perspective focuses on the creation and managing of sound experiences related to the brand. Thus, when hearing a sound, arguably the consumer associates the sound with these earlier experiences and memories possibly triggering emotions and towards the brand – the building of a relationship between sound and consumer Gustafsson (2019).

From a marketing view, this is interesting because the introduction of a platform's perspective results in new ways in which we can analyse the use of sounds from a consumer perspective. Mainly focusing on imagined associations and emotions deriving from there also arguably opens up a discussion of nostalgia enchanting with the use of sound (further discussed in the theory part of the study). We argue, looking at the consumer as an active agent and co-creator brand meaning through sound leads to a more comprehensive picture of the sonic branding field. This being said, does not mean that the sonic branding field should abandon earlier music theory and/or earlier strategic oriented sonic branding literature. Instead, this means looking at the field from a broader view and taking in to account the consumer as an active agent of brand meaning creating associations and emotions and attitudes deriving from there.

As mentioned above; sonic branding is a broad and relatively complex field and there are several different ways in which sound has been used for marketing purposes throughout the years. As Sonic Branding has generally been considered 'the next big thing' in branding and marketing literature for about a decade there have been relatively few studies published on the subject (Gustafsson 2015). At the same time as us knowing relatively little there is a growing interest among marketers and brands to use sound in marketing strategies. Still, failing to use sound in marketing and authentically connect with the consumer, Gustafsson (2019) argues brands risk being perceived as intrusive. Therefore, studying sonic branding may contribute to a better understanding which may result in more effective use of sonic branding by marketers. Thus, leading us to the purpose of the study.

1.3 Purpose and research question

The purpose of this study is to investigate how sound logos are perceived by consumers and how it affects the perceived brand image. In order to achieve this; we intend to explore how consumers interpret sound logos and what associations the sounds evoke by interviewing consumers, thus allowing us to form an understanding of how it may be used by marketers. An inductive research approach is used when designing the outline of the study and the interviews. We have tried to form a research question that encapsulates the purpose and to work as an anchor whilst conducting research and writing this study, and it resulted in the following:

Research question:

- **How do sound logos affect consumers and their perception of a brand?**

1.4 The outline of the study



1. In the first chapter of this study; we present background information concerning sonic marketing. We also provide a problem discussion and an overview of the use of sound in marketing as well as presenting the purpose and research question of this study.

2. In the second chapter; a summary of relevant previous research is presented with the theoretical foundation, upon which the analysis of this study is built upon. It will therefore be referenced later in the study.

3. In the third chapter; methodology and research approach is discussed and the interview structure is presented, along with the role of the interview guide and subsequent descriptions of the sound logos. Following this; the selection process of the sample group is presented along with the respondents. The chapter closes with a discussion of ethical considerations, limitations and a critique of the methodology of the study.

4. The fourth chapter presents the results of our interviews in conjunction with an analysis of the collected data. It is divided into three sections, one for each of the concerned brands followed by a summary and presentation of the conclusions made.

5. The fifth chapter is used to discuss the implications of the conclusions drawn from the analysis.

6. This study closes with concluding remarks and a brief summary of our results and analysis, followed by a discussion of the contributions for future studies and the remaining information gap.

*Fig. 1 - Study outline
Source: Authors' own elaboration.*

2.0 Theoretical framework

In the second chapter, a summary of relevant previous research is presented with the theoretical foundation, upon which the analysis of this study is built upon. It will therefore be referenced later in the study.

2.1 Comprehensive theoretical summary

The figure below briefly summarizes and describes how the theoretical framework can be divided into three parts. Music theory and sensory branding makes up a foundation for sonic branding which could be considered an amalgamation of the two.

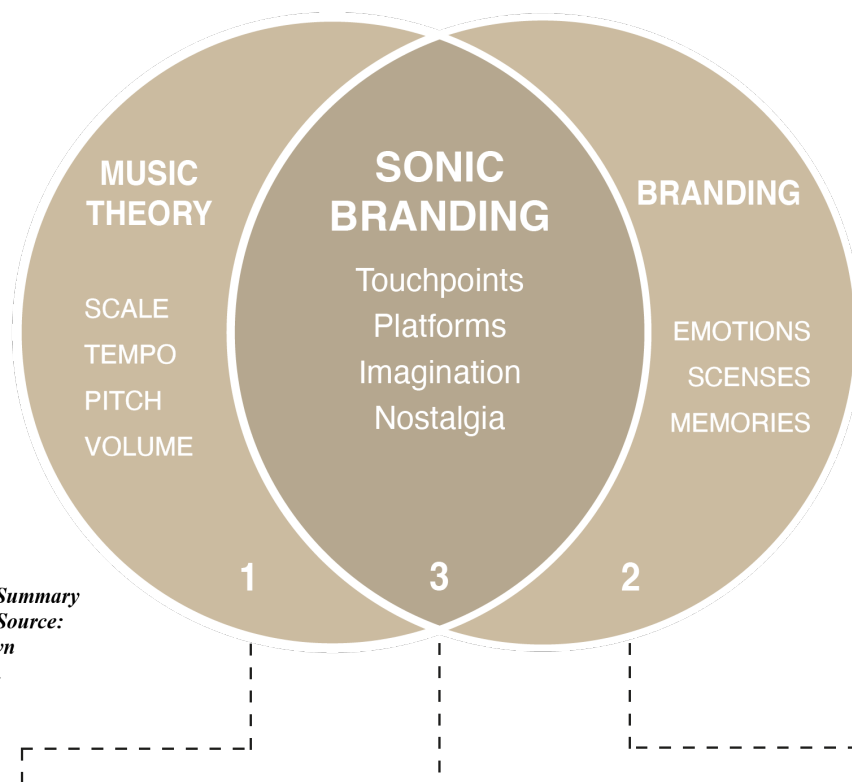


Fig. 2 - Summary of theories Source: Authors' own elaboration.

Music theory explains how different aspects such as scale, tempo, pitch, volume and instrumentation affect the perception of sounds and can be used to predict emotional responses.

Sonic branding combines the two but places the perception of sounds in focus. It discusses how consumer experiences and behavior is influenced by the sounds that occur before, during and after consumption.

Sensory branding concerns the relationship between brands and the consumer. It explains how brands may facilitate and nurture this relationship as well as influence consumer behavior through the stimulation of one or more senses.

2.2 Sound and Music

A general look at sound and music and how humans understand and react to it is important, as it is basically the foundation of sonic branding. A better understanding of sound and music theory will help to better understand how sonic branding can exist as a concept. As the sound logo examples we use in the data collection for this study are music-based, we will put extra focus on the music theory part.

Hearing lets us know what's going on around us, more than any other sensory system. In fact, through hearing, we can know just about everything that's happening in our surroundings (Brownell 1997). The human ears are active around-the-clock - even when sleeping, and are part of the human survival instinct, which is the reason we are especially sensitive (as mentioned in the introduction) to the sounds of crying, screaming or sirens. Apart from these sounds, humans also react particularly much when hearing something we associate with some form of reward, or when hearing one's own name (Jackson 2003).

The fact that music has the ability to generate a significant amount of emotional responses is undeniable, and there are many studies to support this, according to Fulberg (2003). For example, he refers to a study, in which two pieces of music were chosen. One was considered sad and one was considered happy. Subjects were shown pictures of different sad, happy and neutral facial expressions at the same time as the music was played to them. When the neutral facial expression picture was shown with the sad music in the background, the subjects considered the picture to be sad (Fulberg 2003).

The way the music is written is the way the music is interpreted by the human brain. In general (in Western music), music written in a major scale is perceived as positive, while music written in a minor scale is perceived as negative. Faster tempos are generally associated with positivity, happiness and excitement, and slower tempos with negativity, sadness and sentimentality (Parncutt 2014; Bruner 1990). For example, a sound logo written in major scale and in a fast tempo could be of use when trying to send out a positive message or feeling, whatever that might be. And, of course, the other way around for slower sound logos in minor scale. Companies might gain from taking advantage of different musical scales and tempos in their marketing, and it's likely that they do this. Further, Bruner (1990) writes that music written in a higher pitch is perceived as happy and more exciting, while low pitched music is perceived as sad. Music in a medium pitch can be perceived in several different ways, including as sentimental or as exciting. He also writes that the instruments have an effect on the perceived feelings. For example, string instruments are generally considered happy, while woodwind instruments are connected to negativity and awkwardness, and brass instruments to triumphant-ness and/or grotesque-ness. The volume of the music also has an effect on how the music is perceived. Louder music is usually characterised as happy or exciting, while softer music is characterised as more peaceful and serious (Bruner 1990). All the sound and music theory above will be to our advantage when analysing our qualitative research, as the sound logos we will use in the interviews are of different scale, tempo, instrumentation, and pitch.

2.3 Sensory Branding

According to Krishna (2010), sensory marketing is when marketing is used to attract consumers through their senses and to influence their behavior. The sound, look, smell, touch and taste of products can be used to influence choices, emotions, memories and consumption behaviors. By exploiting these sensations, it's possible to increase the appeal of a product or service. It's also worth noting that humans can imagine different senses and might have varying abilities to do this, which can affect how a person reacts to, e.g., an advertisement (Krishna 2010). Sensory branding is one of the main components of sonic branding and it is therefore important to be cognizant of how different sounds affect, and is perceived by consumers when designing a sound logo for a brand.

Humans are exposed to different sounds constantly every day, whether it's the sounds of commercials on tv or the sound of jackhammers at a construction site near one's home. Marketers in all domains use sound to try to captivate consumers (Krishna 2010). Moreover, she writes that words and language affect consumers in unique ways, and while marketers often use it as the main method for auditory communication, music also plays a big role.

Furthermore, Krishna (2010) writes that music in advertising can trigger feelings and moods that may shape consumers' attitudes towards specific brands. In most advertisements, the music is intended to accompany and work in synergy with the particular meaning or message. In some cases, the music plays a central role in the ad - for example, if the ad message is woven into the piece of music. This is often the case for advertisements that use a jingle or signature sound. According to Anand and Sternthal (1990), background music with a spoken message above is more effective, when trying to mediate a specific message or meaning. Although, most signature sounds and jingles are primarily meant to convey a feeling or to just be memorable. Again, music can be an effective means to evoke feelings (Krishna 2010). For example (as mentioned in the Sound and Music theory part), faster tempo, and major key-written music generates positive feelings. Krishna (2010) also writes that music can generate feelings of nostalgia, which could allow businesses and organizations with a long history, to effectively recycle or keep using sound logos that have been used in the past, to trigger positive emotions and memories.

2.4 Sonic Branding

Having discussed both sound and music theory and sensory marketing, we will discuss the relatively limited research area sonic branding. We will mainly present new theoretical paradigms, but also base it on the previously mentioned theories. This, in order to achieve a more comprehensive understanding of the theoretical bedrock of what is sonic branding. Firstly, we will discuss the basics of sonic branding, in order to inaugurate the reader to the core foundations and terms of sonic branding. Subsequently, a brief historical literature overview from the field, dating back to the early 1990's to present day is also given. Continuing, we will thereafter introduce the reader to two different perspectives of sonic branding; touchpoints and platforms, as well as discuss their different theoretical approaches.

In regard to these two perspectives, a connection is made, and a discussion regarding the previously mentioned privatization of music is also presented. Thereafter, a more recent and new approach to the subject regarding sounds generating imagination linked to brands and, in extension, possibly creating nostalgia is discussed and further strengthened, compared with other nostalgia related literature.

2.4.1 Defining sonic branding

In this study, we have chosen to continue using Jackson's (2003) definition of sonic branding which, in very broad terms, can be summed up as marketing with any kinds of sounds. Before continuing on this topic, it is of value to the reader to be aware that, in this study, the words "sonic", "sound" and variations of "audio", basically refer to the same thing. In other words, discussions regarding marketing in any means the using of sound, audio, or the management of these, are considered one and the same thing. Using the above presented definition, we also argue that, since any kind of sound could be considered sonic branding, all companies also actively practice sonic branding whether or not they are aware of it. Fact is, every company makes "noise" in some way, whether it is through adverts, background music, smartphone message alerts, sounds from a factory producing a product, etcetera. Even the non-usage of sounds, or in other words, silence, can be defined as a type of sonic branding as silence can be experienced and interpreted by consumers (Gustafsson 2015). Or according to Treasure (2007), everything is sound and in extension sonic marketing. Still, without any actual sounds, many brands might lose a big part of their brand identity. For instance, Nokia's use of their sonic logo, or Apple's text-message sounds on the iPhone are examples of sounds strongly associated with these brands (Gustafsson 2019).

Previous studies focusing on the marketing field of sonic branding can, according to Kilian (2009), be regarded as inconsistent and scattered with different theoretical approaches which in turn, argued by Gustafsson (2019) makes the field very difficult to map out. Terms used by researchers to describe branding with sounds are many and though sonic branding is the most commonly used term for this type of research field, it is worth mentioning it is accompanied with synonymous terms like "audio branding" and "acoustic branding" (Gustafsson 2019). Literature-wise, when looking at sonic branding related studies Gustafsson (2015) argues the first study was seen to have started in 1982 with Milliman's article, regarding restaurants and music tempo attempting to generate specific behaviors among consumers, mentioned above. Yet, we argue, as per Jackson (2003) if every company makes "noise" and all noise is regarded as sonic branding as per definition roots possibly go back much further in sound related studies. Even so, looking into sound and marketing literature there are some studies of the two fields combined in a mutual relationship. Arguably, Jackson (2003) wrote the most influential book regarding sonic branding, exploring the basic foundations of sonic branding from a strategic perspective. More recent examples that are frequently used throughout the study are Gustafsson's (2015; 2019) articles arguing for a broader view including a consumer perspective.

2.4.2 Strategic sonic branding

From a traditional point of view when discussing the management of sound, earlier research, regarding the topic of sonic branding, mostly focuses on how to change and/or generate consumer behavior through the use of sound, with the intent of altering the likelihood of a consumer making a purchase. In other words, exposing the consumer to sounds or music with a certain scale or pitch, etc. - in order to adjust the probability of a consumer making a purchase (Gustafsson 2019). In simpler terms, playing a type of sound in order to make the consumer more likely to buy products. This type of research, what Gustafsson (2019) describes as strategic sonic brand management, mostly focuses on managing different types of sound, with the intent of altering and/or a type of customer behavior (Gustafsson 2015). This meaning, music or sound is treated as a tool to, as per Milliman's (1984) article regarding music tempo in restaurants, generate some result. To exemplify, music is played (tool) in a clothing store to generate purchase intent (result). From a strategic perspective, the use of "touchpoints", which can be defined as places, communications, or technologies through the use of either sound or music from which a brand can "touch" the consumer in order to alter or generate a certain behavior. Throughout the sonic branding field, many have recommended the creation of new as well as the optimization of these touchpoints. (E.g. Milliman 1984; Jackson 2003; Lusensky 2010). A touchpoint, in this regard, can be practically anything, as long as a consumer is exposed to sound "through" it. For example a subway station where one is exposed to the sounds of arriving trains, a radio, TV, clothing store, etcetera. The figure below illustrates and exemplifies different touchpoints that common consumers frequently interact with:

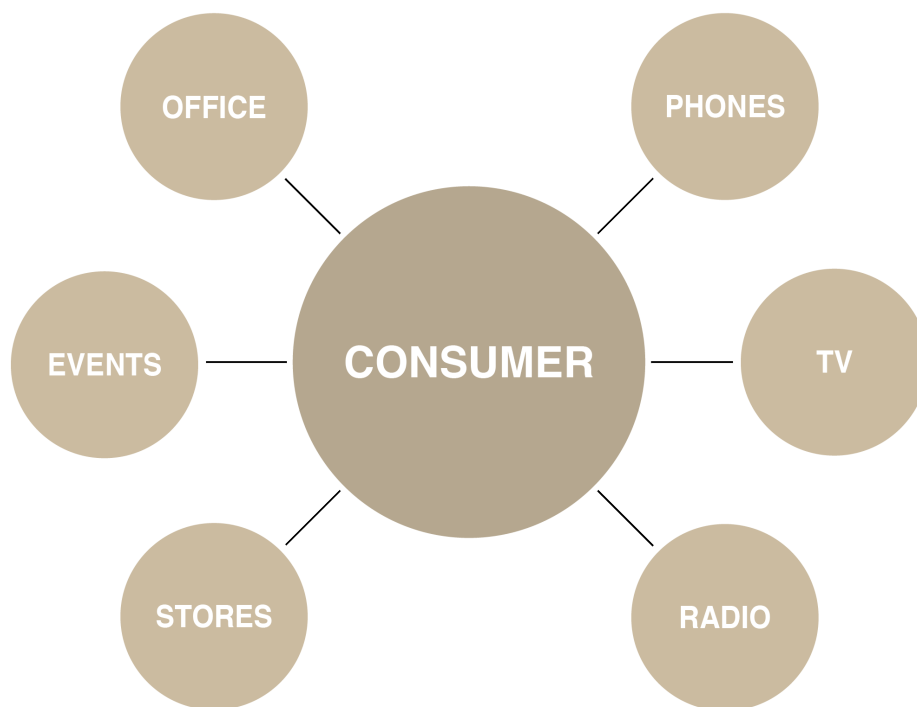


Fig. 3 - Touchpoints

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

2.4.3 Four characteristics of successful branding

From a strategic sonic branding perspective, applying Jackson's (2003) four characteristics, sounds and sound logos can be utilized to effectively project a brand image and values onto consumers to shape their experience and subsequently perception of a brand. According to Jackson (2003), there are four characteristics that are essential to successful branding. Firstly, the branding needs to be distinct, which means that it should be recognizable and distinguishable from the competitors. It's important that everything, from product design to marketing communication, is coherent and well thought out. Secondly, the branding needs to be memorable. Being memorable has been recognized by marketers as one of the most important goals for a long time. Being distinctive is (again) of importance, as this is what makes the brand memorable, rather than ads, for example. Thirdly, it needs to be flexible. For a brand to be flexible, it should work across different audiences, platforms, and countries, and preferably have a consistent meaning to several different audiences. The brand name is usually the least flexible part, as it relies on the written language it was created in. For example, a brand name in one language can mean something else in another language. When it comes to brand flexibility, sound and music can be a significant asset, as they are fairly easy to change without causing too much confusion among the consumers. The last characteristic is honesty, which in this situation means being "on-brand". On-brand, as a definition, is hard to define - honest branding just needs to feel right. It needs to fit in with all brand associations and components, both aesthetically and emotionally. Finally, adding on to these four characteristics, Jackson (2003) argues companies need a 'consistent' connection between brand and sound. That is, when trying to utilize sound in marketing it is vital that the recipient is continually reminded about the connection to the brand and sound. Otherwise risking no connection whatsoever (Jackson 2003).

2.4.4 Platforms and privatization of music consumption

In recent years, as discussed above, portable music technology has evolved rapidly, which in turn has led to a complete change in the way people listen to and consume music in modern life (Bull 2007). This, what Gustafsson (2019) argues can be called the "privatization" of music consumption, basically refers to a consumer consumption mobility - to being able to consume music anywhere, to have almost limitless consumption possibilities. In other words, technology has made it possible to, in a comfortable and easy way, carry almost unlimited amounts of sounds and music with you on phones and MP3s. Also, consumers now can choose what music they want to listen to, and when they want to listen to it - something that was much more difficult just a few years ago. According to Harvey (2017), the privatization of music consumption began already in the 1980's with Sony's Walkman. Somewhat 20 years later the iPod was launched and made it even easier to carry one's personal music library around. Bull (2007) writes that in more recent years, the way we listen to music has, again, changed drastically. Since music streaming services had its big breakthrough, everyone can listen to practically all the recorded music in the world, at any time. Further, he writes that this has changed the consumer's relationship with music in general, but also with their general mobility and their access to nostalgia (Bull 2007). According to Gustafsson (2019), this change in music

consumption is something that marketers need to acknowledge, because when consumer culture changes, the overall culture will eventually change as well, and brands need to partake in these changes in order to stay relevant to the consumers. In turn, this has led to difficulties for marketers to control what sounds consumers are exposed to, since consumers today have the option of just plugging in their earphones and blocking out all other sounds. In other words, finding customer interfaces and sending messages through sound, via different touch points, seems to have become something of an obstacle (Gustafson 2019).

On the contrary to a strategic sonic branding view Lusensky (2010) argues that marketers should, rather than to “chase” after consumers through touchpoints, reach out to consumers through and by being meaningful platforms focusing on the consumer as an active agent of brand co-creation. For instance, Apple has successfully managed to co-create a connection, via iPhone message sounds to consumers imagining the brand. In simpler terms, when hearing the iPhone message sound, you probably know it is coming from an apple product. More examples include Spotify, YouTube, Instagram. Bull (2007) also mentions cars with stereos or even churches as meaningful platforms. Worth mentioning is that a platform, defined by Gustafsson (2019); is commonly dependent on new technology. Places like churches with bells can be considered a platform, for example, since the sound arguably creates a relation between the sound (bells ringing), consumer (the person attending the church) and the brand (the church).

In other words, from this perspective; brands should not use music as a way to generate a result, as per the strategic brand perspective discussed above, but rather a way for marketers to facilitate a relationship between a consumer and the brand. Changing focus from the earlier touchpoint metaphor to platforms in some way, Gustafsson (2019) argues, could prove to be more dynamic and useful for the purpose of sonic branding. The platform model, in contrast to the previous strategic view, focuses on the consumers interacting and seeking out music rather than chasing after the consumer and constantly risking the brand being perceived as intruding (Gustafsson 2015). From a strategic sonic branding perspective, using touchpoints may cause marketers to risk being perceived as intruding. Instead Gustafsson (2019) argues the future of sonic branding needs to find a way to level with the consumer through sound, guiding the consumer as a cultural platform. To avoid being intrusive, and in extension perceived in a bad light, a brand should, arguably, instead reach out to consumers in a way that is not intrusive but as part of their everyday life (e.g. the Apple message signal or Windows start-up sound) (Gustafsson 2019). In simpler terms, this means that trying to connect with a consumer with commercials through, for example, tv’s, is considered ineffective and, possibly, intrusive. Instead, a possibly better course of action would be creating platforms, or as we call them - “brand outlets”, with the consumers rather than for the consumers (Holt & Cameron 2010).

2.4.5 Imagination and nostalgia.

A recent study, published by Gustafsson (2019), explores the role of imagination in relation to sound and music. Gustafsson (2019) argues that imagination, from a consumer perspective, plays an important role in the creation of associations, emotions and, possibly, the enabling of nostalgia. This is something we will explore further through using qualitative interviews. From

a sonic branding perspective, this means that marketers can, much like from a sensory branding perspective as discussed above, utilize sound in order to create imagination and in extension influence relations to the brand. In simpler terms, this means that we, as consumers, always connect personal individual associations to certain sounds and music. The nature of these associations then, arguably, influences the emotional relation towards the sound and possibly, in the long run, the brand itself. Since, the definition of nostalgia is longing for an imagined, or idealized, past or future (Brown et al. 2003), imagination, arguably, also becomes central for the enabling of nostalgia.

A study published by Grimshaw and Garner (2015) investigates the connection between sound and music, and imagination. They argue that as we can imagine speech, we must also be able to imagine certain brands inside our minds. In other words, when exposing a consumer to a certain sound it is therefore possible, if not arguably likely, that certain associations to the sound are formed depending on earlier experience with the sound or sound genre. Continuing Grimshaw and Garner's (2015) argues, much like senses as seeing, feeling, hearing, smelling, etcetera, imagination is fundamental for humans – we cannot disconnect imagination - as little as we can disconnect any of the senses. What this means is that we, as humans, cannot disconnect imagination just as little as we can disconnect any of the senses. In practical terms, exposing the consumer to a sound or song makes them imagine personal memories generated from a certain sound or song. What associations and in extension emotions accompanied with the sound, in other words, depends on previous memories regarding the sound. This is where marketers, from a marketing perspective, arguably can influence sound perception through the managing of memories and earlier experiences. From this angle, imagination becomes the foundation as to why creating positive associations and, as Gustafsson (2019) argues, not to be perceived as intrusive is vital for marketers and this study. Still, as Gustafsson (2015) points out, imagination is rarely mentioned in branding literature despite its, arguable, importance to branding overall and especially to sonic branding.

As nostalgia means a longing for an imagined, or idealized, past or future (Brown et al. 2003) and sound can initiate imagination, it is therefore also a base for enchanting the consumer through nostalgia. In reverse, since the idealized future or past must be imagined this also means that nostalgia is not possible without imagination (Gustafsson 2019). Analysing different sounds and the perception of these through a “imagination-scope” thus enables a discussion about nostalgia.

According to Hartmann et al. (2019), nostalgia marketing refers to marketers trying to enchant consumers via the offering of idealized-themed market resources or services. To enchant is to make ordinary emotions into emotionally-charged and magical through products or services. The idealized product or service refers to products that have a real or fictitious link to the past or future. Good examples of this are old rock bands reuniting, tv-shows that are set in a nostalgia-filled past, or revamped phone brands. Continuing, Hartmann et al. (2019) argues there are three specific ways or “streams”, in which marketers can create enchantment out of nostalgia marketing. The first stream is about how a brand can capture consumers via stories of the brand's past. The second stream is about relaunching a defunct brand as a retro brand or

updating a historical brand. The third stream is about how nostalgia can be both forward- and backward-looking (Hartmann et al. 2019). In the context of sonic branding, this means that marketers, arguably, can use sound to enchant products and services in order to enable nostalgia. For example, using a retro themed song may enchant a product, service or, argued by Holt and Cameron (2010), affect the consumers perception of brand image. Knowing sound results in consumer imagination which in turn enables nostalgia and partly defines attitude towards the brand gives us vital knowledge when analysing consumer perception.

2.5 Summary

As traditional perspectives in sonic branding literature tend to focus on touchpoints (places or objects consumers are exposed to sound) and the management of these (E.g. Milliman 1984; Jackson 2003), more recent studies have a focus on a more consumer-oriented approach (Gustafsson 2019). The former perspective's main focus lies in how to alter and/or generate consumer behavior through the use of sound. The goal is usually to change the likelihood of a consumer making a purchase, and is achieved by using the sound as a “carrier” of sorts. For example, exposing the consumer to a specific sound (carrier) in order to alter the probability of a consumer making a purchase (goal). The consumer-oriented approach instead empathizes on using sound to create a relationship with the consumer. This is achieved by managing experiences related to the sound and using the brand's products or the brand itself as a sound outlet or platform (Gustafsson 2019). Using the brand as an outlet for sound might seem difficult to distinguish from touchpoints at first but the difference is vital.

Whereas touchpoints are considered places or objects used to expose the consumer to a sound, a platform instead is a product or service directly embedded with a sound. For example, the iPhone message sound, a film intro, or church bells, as they are embedded into the activity of going to church. Difference being, instead of chasing after consumers and risking being perceived as intruding, brands can connect with consumers on a regular day basis, through the managing of sounds in the products or services the consumer is using. In other words, letting the consumer seek out the brands’ products or services and enchanting them with sound instead of seeking out the consumer through touchpoints. The privatization of music (Bull 2007) further complicates the use of touchpoints since consumers now can carry music or sound with them. Thus, consumers also can control what sounds they want to be exposed to despite where they are resulting in the, arguably, diminishing importance of the strategic perspective and further strengthening the argument why to use platforms.

Lastly, imagination is, arguably, central in the way in which consumers perceive and interpret any type of sound or music (Grimshaw & Garner 2015). As consumers are exposed to sound, they will, inevitably, start to imagine things connected to personal memories from previous experiences. What associations and emotions accompanied are with the sound depends on previous memories regarding the specific sound. Here, the consumer relation with the sound is vital since good memories would inevitably make the consumer imagine associations regarding those good memories. Notably, the same could be said for bad memories connected to a sound. To not be perceived as intruding (see Gustafsson 2019) becomes of central importance and as

such further strengthening the argument for using the brand as a sound outlet (platform). Concluding, imagining memories and associations opens up the possibility of enchanting the consumer through nostalgia marketing. As nostalgia means a longing for an imagined, or idealized, past or future (Brown et al. 2003) and sound can initiate imagination, it is therefore also a base for enchanting the consumer through nostalgia. Arguably, studies show that sonic branding is at its most effective when not used to chase the consumer but instead using sounds to enchant the brand through platforms and, in extension, enabling nostalgia. Still, both the use of sound through touch points and platforms do exist in parallel with each other and even though the platforms perspective, arguably, could prove to be lucrative in a market, since touch points such as tv commercials are not likely to stop any time soon.

3.0 Methodology

In this chapter, a brief summary of the methodology used to gather data is given, followed by a discussion of the research approach utilized in this study. After that, the interview structure, interview guide, and the chosen sound logos are described. Following this, the population we have chosen to sample is discussed and ethical considerations made during the study are presented. Finally, we present the limitations of our study and why we have chosen to limit the scope of the study as well as methodological criticism.

3.1 Overview/Choice of methodology

This study utilizes qualitative interviews with individuals between the ages of 20 to 30 to gather primary data with the intention of analysis in later chapters. The interviews were conducted over Zoom, a video conference tool, and consists of a mixture of semi-structured and unstructured interviews to gather data required for drawing conclusions regarding the respondents perception of the selected brands. We selected three brands for this study; BMW, Hornbach and Intel. The interview-guide can be found in Appendix 1 and is used to structure the interviews consisting of questions that attempt to elicit information regarding the respondents' brand perception and emotions triggered by the sound logos. For example, questions such as: 'What is the first thing that comes to mind when hearing the sound?' and 'What do you think that the sound is trying to convey?' are constructed to elicit information regarding the associations and perception of the sounds. The respondents are not informed about the name of the brands utilizing the sound logos until the final part of the interview where questions such as 'Has your initial perception of the sound changed?' and 'When knowing the brand behind the sound, do you think the sound and brand image correspond?' are asked with the intention of eliciting whether the context of the brand has an effect on the perception of the sounds. The audio of the interviews recorded and they were later transcribed, the transcripts can be found in Appendix 2 and the respondents are presented, along with the date in the section named 'Selecting a population to sample'. The reasoning behind presenting the date of the interviews is that it may increase reliability of the data, i.e., the interviews were conducted to gather primary data and the presentation of date may increase the credibility of the study as it shows that they were actually conducted in conjunction with the writing of this study.

3.2 Research methodology and approach

A qualitative research methodology was chosen as Bell et al. (2019) describes it as more suitable for social issues, and the associations made with a sound logo is arguably social. Furthermore, an inductive research approach, as opposed to a deductive research approach, is chosen as the field of sonic branding is relatively unexplored compared to other fields. The two approaches mainly differ in the way that previous research is applied (Bell et al. 2019). An inductive research approach places the obtained data and results in the center of focus, without any consideration for previous research, in the hopes of drawing conclusions that can explain the surroundings, thus generating new theories. A deductive research approach, on the other hand, starts with close study of previous research in order to construct hypotheses that the researcher can either accept or reject by gathering data.

While this study does not intend to generate new theories in the field of sonic branding, the entry point of this study is inductive and does not take existing theories into consideration when forming our research question. Previous research is instead used to explain the generated data and results. It could therefore be argued that the research approach used is abductive. However, Alvesson et al. (2008) argue that an abductive research approach requires a specific way of utilizing previous research and should not be considered just an equal mixture of deductive and inductive approaches.

As precognitions and biases are arguably part of human nature, it is difficult to adopt a pure inductive research approach. We find it more important to describe the epistemological preconceptions and to which degree our study adheres to a mixture of research approaches. Although categorization of research approach is ultimately unnecessary, in an effort of clarification; the research approach applied in this study could be categorized as inductive with abductive tendencies, emphasizing the inductive approach.

3.3 Data collection

3.3.1 Interview structure and guide

The data collection for this study is done through what Bell et al. (2019) describe as qualitative interviews. This type of interview consists of elements from both semi-structured and unstructured interviews (Bell et al. 2019) and includes some structured questions such as gender and age but makes use of an interview guide. The purpose of the interview guide is, however, not to determine the order of which the questions are asked; it is rather to ensure that we do not lose track of what information is required for the analysis and to move the conversation forward. This is preferred due to the difficult nature of describing attitudes, emotions and associations accurately under the pressure of being interviewed.

The interview is divided into four parts; the first three parts consist of the respondent being played one of the chosen three sound logos, followed by questions regarding their perception of the corresponding sound logo. In the final part; the respondent is asked questions aiming to elicit perceived differences between the sound logos. The separation of sound logos is intended

to reduce the risk of confusing the respondent and give structure to the interview, while the order of the prepared questions in the interview guide is less important (Bell et al. 2019). The lack of structure within each interview part is intended to allow us to assist the respondent in describing their perception by asking follow-up questions and to clarify concerns or questions regarding the subject or interview. Furthermore, the purpose of this study is of investigative nature which means that we aim to deepen our understanding of the subject rather than quantifying a relationship. This implies that our research question does not require testing a large, shallow, data sample but instead allows for a smaller sample size which instead is studied very closely.

3.3.1.1 Sound 1 - BMW

The “double gong” sound was used as BMW’s primary sound logo for 14 consecutive years. In 2013, it was replaced with a new sound logo (Nica 2013). We chose this sound because we thought that most respondents would not recognise it, but still have opinions on it, as it has a rather distinct and specific sound. The BMW sound logo used in this study consists of two parts; the first part is a loud horn playing a low note and transitions into part two which only consists of two metallic percussive hits.

3.3.1.2 Sound 2 - Hornbach

The Hornbach sound logo has been in use for at least 20 years and is used in many of their advertisements (Raven and Finch 2017). We chose to use this specific sound logo because we felt that it is unique and a sound that was recognized by the respondents would allow them to provide more nuanced thoughts. It consists of a male a capella choir singing non-existent words.

3.3.1.3 Sound 3 – Intel

The Intel sound logo, written by Walter Werzowa, was introduced in 1994, and has been in use ever since (with continuous updates) (Kan 2020). We chose the five-note tune because it might very well be one of the most recognisable sound logos of all time (according to Jackson (2003), it’s estimated that the sound is played every five minutes somewhere in the world), but younger people today might not know exactly what brand it belongs to - we thought that it would be interesting. The sound itself is synthesizer based and consists of five notes, starting with one note that sets the tone, and then followed by four quicker tones.

3.3.2 Selecting a population to sample

During the conception of the idea that led to the research question in this study, we realized that in order to make the most of every interview we need to utilize what Bell et al. (2019) describes as purposive sampling which implies that the respondents are chosen based on their relevance to the research question. While the chosen respondents are not directly relevant to our specific research question, the idea was that individuals in the ages from 20 to 30 would hold knowledge relevant to the studied logos. Respondents in the ages from 20 to 30 are also

arguably more likely to have knowledge and access to tools such as Zoom that allow us to hold the interviews in a video conference over the internet. The respondents within this age group were also not chosen at random; we chose to include individuals that are acquainted to us as it may increase the likelihood of agreeing to be interviewed. This does not, however, mean that our sample group could be described as a convenience sample according to Bell et al. (2019) as that would involve the sample group being chosen by chance.

The sample size was based largely on time constraints as according to Bell et al. (2019); it is impossible to know how large a sample size should be in order to reach theoretical saturation. We therefore decided on a sample size of 10 respondents as we believe that it allows us to achieve theoretical saturation that is sufficient in the given time frame which the study is written in. The name of the respondents, their age and the duration of the interviews is presented in the table below:

| Name: | Age: | Duration (minutes): | Date: |
|--------------|-------------|----------------------------|--------------|
| Emma | 25 | 50 | 13/05-21 |
| Hannes | 26 | 31 | 11/05-21 |
| Ylva | 28 | 41 | 7/05-21 |
| Gunilla | 23 | 40 | 12/05-21 |
| Jonathan B | 24 | 24 | 13/05-21 |
| Johan | 20 | 40 | 12/05-21 |
| Jonathan | 30 | 50 | 12/05-21 |
| Hugo | 24 | 38 | 6/05-21 |
| Victoria | 23 | 39 | 12/05-21 |
| Jakob | 26 | 38 | 11/05-21 |

Table 1: Respondents
Source: Authors' own elaboration.

3.4 Ethical considerations

Writing a qualitative study during a pandemic increases the amount of ethical aspects we need to take into consideration as researchers. Not only do the usual research standards such as consent and informing respondents of the study's purpose need to be upheld; there is an expectation on us as citizens that we do not let the ongoing Covid-19 virus proliferate further. It is therefore needed to adjust our data collection process so that it minimizes human contact in addition to offering the respondents to be anonymous and using the collected data solely for

the purposes of this study. The interviews were held over Zoom, a video conference tool, in order to allow us to see each other while the interview is ongoing and minimize the risk of spreading the Covid-19 virus. The reason for not anonymizing the respondents, and using their first name, is that we feel that it would benefit the study in terms of realism and reliability. It gives the impression that the respondents are actual individuals and we are able to separate them when utilizing quotes. Not distinguishing between them using some form of name may lead to confusion if two or more respondents would have conflicting opinions or perceptions. We therefore feel that utilizing their names, with their consent, would allow us to present conflicting responses while minimizing the risk for confusion. The added benefit of realism is also why we chose to name the brands in our study; anonymous brands and brand sound logos would lead to the study being too abstract, in our opinion. After assessing the risk of not anonymizing the interviews, we came to the conclusion that their responses in our interviews do not pose any risk to their person or reputation. Only utilizing their first name, age and occupation provides just the amount of information to distinguish the respondents from each other while keeping the reliability of the study intact minimizing risks for damaging the reputation or person of the respondents.

3.5 Limitations

The scientific literary field surrounding sonic branding is relatively new and is therefore not as broad as other fields, we have thus chosen to limit the scope of our research to a few selected brand logos and a qualitative research methodology. A limited scope and a qualitative methodology will allow us to conduct a study that is of at least equal value to that of a quantitative methodology, but during a shorter period of time as it requires fewer data points. Furthermore, to narrow down the scope of this study we have chosen to limit the samples to a population of individuals between the ages of 20 to 30. Studies of wider scope could include more populations to capture differences between age groups but as we are on a relatively tight schedule, we have chosen to limit the sampling to a single population. This does not affect the results provided in this study but as there may be a difference in the channels through which consumers of different age groups interact with brands sonic logos; there may exist a research gap that is worth examining in further studies.

3.6 Methodological criticism

Although we feel that the methodology used in this study is adequate, it is not perfect. The current circumstances with an ongoing pandemic limited our data gathering to be conducted over Zoom. We feel that this may have had an effect on the quality of the interviews as we encountered technical difficulties and trouble with the audio. We do not, however, consider this detrimental to the degree where the data and the conclusions drawn become invalid; it is merely a slight inconvenience with minor implications on the result. Beyond technical difficulties, there are a few concerns that have provided us with knowledge that can be used in future studies. Internalizing sounds and analysing the emotions and associations is difficult, and not everybody is capable or willing to provide information of equal quality. Some respondents are musically trained and are therefore more used to the idea of analysing sound

and its effect on their emotions. This resulted in some respondents providing more useful information and therefore taking a larger space in the analysis. Furthermore, not all respondents were equally aware of the purpose of the study; some respondents were acquainted with at least one of the authors of this study and thus, were more interested in what purpose the study was written for. This may have resulted in skewing the results in some way that we were unable to predict by responding with what they think we want to hear instead of their true emotions. We do, however, find it unlikely that this has had a profound effect on our results. Lastly, the inductive research approach may have had unforeseen implications; as we were less informed on the subject when setting off to conduct this study, we chose sound logos largely based on intuition. If we were to choose sound logos with the knowledge gathered while conducting this study, and the benefit of hindsight; we may have ended up choosing different sound logos. As we chose relatively well-known sound logos, they were recognized by some respondents and therefore affecting the responses they provided, creating an imbalance of information and perhaps affecting the emotional responses. The inductive approach also led to an insufficient amount of data, required for some discussions that we found interesting, for example; 'distinction' in the analysis chapter where we would have liked to compare the brands to competitors.

4.0 Results and analysis


| | BMW | HORNBACK | INTEL |
|--|--|---|---|
| Sound perception | <p>This slow, low-pitched tune was recorded on a brass horn. It was perceived as negative. The metallic, banging sound at the end did also fortify the negative perception.</p> | <p>This relatively fast, mid-pitched tune is in major scale and a cappella, and was perceived as positive. The choir-like vocals helped to evoke positivity and excitement.</p> | <p>This relatively fast, high-pitched melody is in major scale and sounds computerised. It was perceived as positive. All respondents thought the tune to sound tech-y, which evoked feelings of innovation and a bright future.</p> |
| Brand perception | <p>Mixed perception of the brand. Some looked up to BMW, as a maker of luxurious high qualitative cars, while some seemed to hate the brand. Most respondents had relatively strong feelings.</p> | <p>The overall perception of the Hornbach brand seemed to be positive. Most respondents didn't have strong feelings towards Hornbach as a brand. Some thought it to be boring and uninteresting.</p> | <p>The respondents had a positive picture of Intel as a brand, although most didn't have a very strong opinion. No one had anything directly negative to say.</p> |
| Associations and emotions | <p>The sound logo was generally perceived in the same way - as aggressive, unpleasant and not nice. Associations were on the other hand not coherent and varying answers were expressed - such as standing in a factory or watching an action movie.</p> | <p>When exposed to the Hornbach tune, all but two respondents expressed emotions of happiness and wellbeing. Associations were almost conclusively to the home improvement industry. Overall this sound was the most well known.</p> | <p>The Intel sound logo was perceived as happy-sounding and positive by, practically, all respondents. Several respondents associated the sound with old computer sounds and childhood, which sparked nostalgic emotions.</p> |
|  | | | |
| Findings | <p>This sound was arguably the sound respondents connected with least. Though varying, respondents generally thought the BMW sound logo did not match the perception of the brand. This in turn resulted in emotions of confusion and insecurity.</p> | <p>Two respondents interestingly connected the sound to the online betting sites. Expressed reasons for this association was the sounds "over cheerfulness" which both associated to previous memories of online betting commercials. This in turn, resulted in scepticism towards the sound as both respondents already had questioning opinions towards the ethics of the betting industry.</p> | <p>Overall, the Intel tune, though varying among the respondents, generated the most positive feelings. Connecting the sound to imagining childhood memories arguably sparked nostalgia which resulted in a very positive attitude towards the brand.</p> |

Fig. 4 - Summarizing findings. Source: Authors' own elaboration.

The figure above summarizes the findings of the ten conducted interviews and is divided into three parts with the brands in the columns.

4.1 BMW

The first sound that was played to the respondents was the BMW sound logo. It is a relatively short sound that starts with a wind instrument, or a horn, playing a low note and then transitions into two tight, metallic, percussive sounds. In general, the sound logo was perceived as loud and noisy at the same time as instilling a sense of dread and unease. Also, some respondents associated the tune with watching a movie-scene or playing a video game in a moment where something exciting just happened. Also, the metallic percussion seems to, according to most respondents, result in an industrial element to the sound, which many of the respondents brought up during the interviews.

- *“Well, it sounds industrial, with metallic sounds. So that’s what comes to mind. But it also sounds a bit menacing or evil in the beginning” - Jakob*

From a music theory perspective, the BMW sound logo, which was generally perceived as negative, can arguably be traced to the theories of Parncutt (2014) and Bruner (1990) about the impact of scale and tempo. The tune’s tempo is fairly slow, which might assist in creating the general negative feeling that the respondents expressed. The BMW sound logo doesn't have a third interval, and is therefore neither in major or minor scale. Apart from being written in a slow tempo, the sound is in a low pitch, which, according to Bruner (1990), tends to evoke negative feelings, which might also have influenced the respondents perceived feelings. Continuing, the tune is also being played by a brass horn instrument, which according to Bruner (1990) tends to bring forth triumphant or grotesque feelings. This goes in line with many of the respondents who expressed opinions towards the tune being unpleasant and sometimes even frightening. In other words, these feelings may have been evoked from the brass horn instrumentation used. Interestingly, as many of the respondents considered the sound to be unpleasant, some, on the contrary, thought it to be grand and majestic. These feelings could also have been evoked from the brass horn instruments, which, arguably, strengthens the thesis that the choice of using a brass horn instrument, at least partly, attributed to the respondents perception.

- *“I don’t know how to explain it but it is an aggressive sound which doesn’t have any, it isn’t a nice sound and it lacks melody and softness. It is an aggressive, unpleasant noise” - Emma*

The metallic double gong sound that makes up the second part of the sound logo, was perceived as aggressive-sounding, and tension-creating, by several respondents. According to Jackson (2003), some sounds will grab our attention to a greater extent than others, and are usually connected to some form of danger or reward. It’s possible that the respondents connected the metallic, banging sound to some form of warning or danger, which might have brought forth a general negative feeling. Several of the respondents also connected the sound to some form of

countdown, and expressed the feeling that something important was about to happen. This might also be responsible for the general negative feelings perceived - the countdown could be perceived as some form of warning countdown. Or perhaps a countdown towards a reward? That is unlikely though, as none of the respondents expressed a direct positive feeling when exposed to the sound. All in all, countdown associations were perceived by a minority, and most respondents still saw themselves in noisy, industrial places, such as a mine or construction site. When questioned why, several respondents connected those feelings to the metallic, banging sound.

- *“The first thing that hit me was film music, actually. Yes, that’s the first, and then I got some kind of countdown feeling in some way. It felt kind of epic - that’s how I would describe it.”* - Jonathan

Arguably, to the same extent, respondents also associated the sound with a movie scene where something exciting just had happened or was about to happen. Many argued, the reason for this being because they thought it sounded like a movie, which they had seen in the past. Connections to the sound varied to some extent, but a common denominator, as argued above, was dread and unease, and one respondent even went as far as imagining her limbs getting sawn off by robots in a noisy industrial location. We argue that these imaginations were likely brought forth by some form of earlier experiences the respondents have, in line with the theories of Gustafsson (2019) and Grimshaw and Garner’s (2015). Perhaps someone lived near a construction site for some time, and used to be woken up early in the morning by metallic, banging noises? Maybe someone just connected it to the one time they went to the cinema and watched an epic, amazing movie? It’s possible that some respondents didn’t connect it to a specific experience, but still imagined things that are, unconsciously, connected to previous experiences - of course, it’s hard to know exactly why anyone imagines specific things.

The perception of BMW’s sound logo was, all in all, perceived relatively similarly by the respondents. There were, however, slight differences in whether the respondents considered the emotions evoked by the sound logo to align with their perception of BMW or the car industry in general. A minority considered that emotions instilled by the sound were in line with what is expected from a car manufacturer, but a majority still perceived the sound as noisy, unpleasant and not fitting their perception of BMW as a brand. The general brand image of BMW was that of a “cool” and even a bit “dangerous” car brand, especially focused on male consumers. A minority of the respondents seemed to despise BMW as a brand, and therefore thought that their initial negative feelings towards the sound matched the brand quite well. The ones that were inclined to think of the sound as tension-building and even a bit epic, also, generally, thought that it was a good match. Still, most did not think that the sound logo and perceived brand image aligned very well. In these cases, the respondents had a quite positive perception of BMW as a “classy”, high quality car brand, but thought that the sound logo was unpleasant.

- *“No, I see BMW in a pretty positive light. It is a respected car brand with a little more class and elegance and when I think of their sound logo; I find it annoying and it reminds me of construction work, so I don’t think they match at all” - Emma*

From a strategic brand perspective, the difference between perceived image of brand and the sound communicated by brand managers is seen as a mismatch and, according to Holt and Cameron (2010), would need to be corrected. In other words, any communication perceived by consumers that does not align with the intended brand image would create a gap between what the company wants to be perceived as and what consumers actually perceive. In this case though, since no one of the respondents could link the sound logo to any brand before knowing it belonged to BMW, this would not affect the perception of the brand. In the long run, if BMW had continued to use this sound logo, it would be important, from a strategic point of view, to modify the sound to align the brand image.

As per sonic branding theories, associations towards getting one's limbs sawn off, was probably not BMW's intention. Although, this example probably can be regarded as an extreme. The overall connection to factories and industry might be a reason BMW changed their sound logo. On the other hand, it's possible that BMW, at the time, was trying to mediate some sort of tension and excitement. According to Krishna's (2010) theory on sensory branding, it's possible that the perceived associations by the respondents was what BMW were to mediate with the sound logo. That is not something unpleasant, but something tension-creating - a countdown towards something big. It's interesting, because the BMW sound logo includes several elements that the respondents, in general, perceived as negative. It's highly unlikely that BMW is trying to mediate negativity and unease, but perhaps the "negative" elements of the sound logo helps to create a scary, but exciting tension. Also, as mentioned, the brass horn used in the sound might also help to create a feeling that something grand is about to happen, as per Bruner's (1990) theory. As mentioned, the perception of BMW's sound logo was perceived relatively similarly by most respondents.

4.2 Hornbach

Regarding the sound logo belonging to Hornbach, a majority of the respondents considered the sound itself to be the most positive and uplifting among the three sound logos analysed. This, in contrast to the BMW sound logo, which was generally perceived by the respondents as the opposite, sound wise. In fact, everyone asked, considered the Hornbach tune to generate good feelings of some sort and expressed emotions such as positivity to derive from the overall cheerful and choir-ish melody. Also, the sound was regarded to convey emotions of encouragement and teamwork - a "we can do it" feeling.

Several of the respondents associated the sound to the home-improvement industry at a relatively quick pace. All but two participants made the connection to the industry only, but only one managed to pin the actual company itself. Instead, a common denominator and more prominent connection mentioned by most respondents, was that the sound logo was perceived as commercialized. This meaning, instead of identifying and linking the company brand to the

sound, a connection was made to watching tv. In other words, participants linked the sound logo to the watching of tv commercials, without being able to recognize the brand or sometimes even the industry.

- *“The sound makes me feel positive and it is almost as if people were cheering together over something. That’s what it sounds like, something has gone very well. Well yeah, it sounds very positive. [...] Maybe the paint or home-improvement business, something like that. I’m not completely sure, but something like that.”* – Jakob

When comparing the Hornbach sound logo to the other two sound logos from a music theory perspective; It stands out. As opposed to BMW and Intel, it's not instrumental, but performed in a capella. The song was perceived by the respondents as positive and happy, which goes in line with Parncutt (2014) and Bruner’s (1990) theory, because it's in a relatively fast tempo. It’s also in major scale, which, according to Parncutt (2014) and Bruner (1990), should send out positive signals. This is likely another reason that the respondents perceived the sound as positive and happy. The general positive feelings might also have been evoked because of the sound’s pitch - it’s not written in a particularly high or low pitch. According to Bruner (1990), medium pitched music can bring forth feelings of excitement. Some respondents connected their positive feelings to the cheering-style singing in the sound. Apart from the fact that cheering probably sounds positive to practically everyone, it could have something to do with Jackson’s (2003) theory that humans react especially much to sounds we associate with some form of reward. Perhaps they, unconsciously, connected it to getting cheered at for winning something? That is hard to say, though.

- *“The choir-ish tone in the sound feels very pleasant and the melody develops in a positive direction”* - Hannes

As mentioned, the Hornbach sound logo itself was, in general, perceived as quite positive, but the associations made by the respondents were not always so unanimous. In line with Gustafsson’s (2019) and Grimshaw and Garner’s (2015) theories on imagination and nostalgia, the sound logo did evoke a lot of imagination and associations among the respondents. Many respondents immediately imagined themselves watching tv when hearing the sound, and thought that the sound logo sounded like a generic commercial. While most still felt that the sound itself was positive, the associations they made were a bit more negative. When they associated it with commercials, they expressed feelings of irritation.

- *“It feels a bit annoying that it’s some kind of commercial-thing, because then it feels like there’s going to be another commercial afterwards, and that’s really annoying. [...] I get irritated, because I associate it with commercials, and commercials are boring as hell.”* – Ylva

When asked why they made the association with commercials, two respondents expressed opinions towards the nature of the sound being too positive. Further questioned, both respondents made associations to online gambling companies which both regarded as unethical. In other words, the respondents' reason for associating the sound to online gambling companies was its over-cheerfulness, which was perceived as deceptive, which in turn resulted in a skepticism towards the brand behind.

- *"They're trying too hard to be perceived as relaxed, which is something that might be harmful, and they want to make it seem very positive and fun. Like, "come here and give us money, it will be great", and then, like, woops... this didn't turn out so good."*
- Emma

This finding could be connected to Gustafssons (2019) argument about touchpoints and companies risking being perceived as intruding when utilizing sound this way. Touchpoint strategies, as discussed, focus on reaching out to consumers through sound, with the intent of altering or generating the likelihood of a consumer making a certain decision (e.g. commercials). While the goal is to alter or influence a certain behavior, it is the marketer's job to manage the sound as to be perceived correctly - that is, the way the company wants to be perceived (Gustafsson 2019). In the case of the Hornbach tune, it was, by the respondents, obviously linked to a commercial use - whether or not this is actually the case. As a result, this indication might have contributed to the respondents' association to commercials, which resulted in feelings of irritation and sometimes even skepticism towards the brand. On the other hand, some respondents imagined themselves watching tv commercials, which sparked some modest nostalgia. They connected it to being younger and sitting at home, perhaps with your family, watching tv. Even if some still expressed irritation towards the commercial feeling of the sound, they seemed to enjoy the nostalgic emotions arising from there. This, from a marketing view, is interesting since this study's findings also indicates associations made to commercials can have a positive impact towards the brand. In this case, associations were made to being at home, watching television, and feelings deriving from this included happiness and security. Arguably, if a company in some way can make sure the consumer is located in an environment that's spawning positive emotions, sounds in commercials might indeed be associated with those emotions. On the other hand, it might be a difficult thing to ensure that the consumer is in a "happy place" before being exposed to commercials.

- *"I see myself inside, on the couch, in front of the tv. I'm at home. It feels kind of safe, in that sense. I think it's about the memoirs connected with the sound. It's think it's associated with what I feel when I'm at home."* - Hugo

From Hornbach's side of view, it is arguably likely the feelings Hornbach tries to evoke with the sound, in line with Krishna's (2010) theory on sensory branding. According to Anand and Sternthal (1990), a spoken message can be more effective in delivering a specific message, than a jingle or signature sound. It's debatable if the Hornbach sound logo actually has a spoken message, but the fact that it's in a cappella says something. Without using actual words, this

might be an attempt in mediating a happy, let's-do-it-together-feeling towards the consumers. This is, after all, what several respondents expressed when hearing the yippie-ja-ja-yippie-yippie-yeah-melody. Based on this, it's unlikely that the same melody, but recorded instrumentally, for example, would have had the same impact on the respondents. The majority thought that the sound logo was a good match with Hornbach as a brand, and that the feelings evoked from the sound logo was on par with their perception of the brand. This means that, according to Krishna's (2010) theory on sensory branding, the Hornbach sound logo is successful in mediating emotions and messages that are in line with the perceived brand image.

4.3 Intel

The third sound played to the respondents was the Intel sound logo. When the Intel tune was played, a majority recognized it, and everyone pinned the sound to the tech industry fairly quickly. Even so, only one respondent could actually connect the sound to the company itself, which is interesting since it, arguably, strengthens Jackson's (2003) theory concerning constant reminders between sound and brand. In this case, no reminder has been made to what company is behind the sound logo and therefore being the reason a majority failed to make associations towards the company. On the other hand, when asking the respondents as to why they connected it to the tech business, most replied because of the sound's "tech-ish" character, and that it sounded computer-made. Several of the respondents compared it to sounds and melodies that are typical for the tech business. In other words, it might have been the character of the sound leading the respondents to associate the sound with the tech industry rather than the brand. Similar associations, such as innovation and forward-thinking were also expressed by some of the respondents. Continuing, earlier associations and memories with the sound character were mentioned, and a distinct connection was made with childhood and earlier life nostalgic memories which might have altered opinions in a positive direction towards the brand.

As mentioned, all of the respondents associated the Intel tune with the tech industry and when further questioned, a distinct connection to computers could be distinguished. In fact, many considered the sound to be linked to "startup-sounds" and connections were generally made to Microsoft and Windows, or to a greater extent other computer companies and/or systems. As several of the respondents connected the sound to the start-up of a technical device, with some imagining themselves sitting in front of a computer, many also associated the sound with starting up certain games and the game "The Sims" was often mentioned.

- *"It feels like I'm startin something up. Like a video game or a computer - kind of like something's starting - like playing Sims when I was younger"* – Gunilla

Comparing sound perception with the previous two sounds, we argue that the Intel tune was the only sound that a majority of the respondents connected to a personal experience. The general association to the start-up of a computer resulted in the respondents imagining childhood memories such as playing a video game or starting a computer, and compared to the other two sounds analysed, the memories connected with the intel tune resulted in a general

likability towards the brand. In other words, as the respondents associated the sound with a personal memory, their willingness to like the brand increased. Interestingly enough, Intel actually has nothing to do with either of the two associations. Intel produces microprocessors and other hardware that's on the inside of computers and gaming consoles, but has nothing to do with the visual or auditory start-up experience.

The Intel sound was connected to personal memories rather than to, e.g., commercials. This, arguably, resulted in a positive attitude towards the brand as the memory and feelings deriving from there also were regarded as positive. The most important difference being that, instead of the sound itself mediating emotions, the positive attitude originates from the personal memory. Thus, the earlier experience connected with the sound was crucial for the respondent's sound perception to be regarded as most positive among the three sounds. Notably, when saying that the Intel tune was perceived as the most positive, it is to be seen from an overall association and imagination perspective. This is not to be mixed up with the most positive sound perception that, as we already discussed, belonged to Hornbach. Here the difference being imagined associations was, when playing the Intel tune, the most positive compared to respondents describing perceptions solely about the sound.

Music-wise, the Intel sound logo is written in major scale, which, according to Parncutt (2014) and Bruner (1990), generates positive feelings. It's also in a fairly fast tempo and a relatively high pitch, which Parncutt (2014) and Bruner (1990) state can bring forth positivity. This, arguably, contributes to the overall positive perception.

- *"I would say that this is relatively positive, as well. There's no minor tone to be heard, and they want to mediate a positive feeling. So I would absolutely say that I get a positive feeling."* - Jakob

The connection made by several respondents - the start-up of a computer or gaming console led, in turn, to nostalgic emotions - the feeling of being young and being allowed to use the computer or to play video games. Krishna (2010) writes that brands with a long history can keep using old sound logos to trigger nostalgic emotions among consumers. This is likely a reason that Intel has kept the same sound logo since 1994 (with a few minor tweaks over the years). With Intel's long history in the tech business and strong brand presence, it makes a lot of sense to exploit their position and their successful sound logo. As mentioned, several of the respondents experienced nostalgic emotions when hearing the sound. Many connected it to their childhood and using an old Windows-computer or a video game console, and felt that the sound successfully mediated feelings of nostalgia and memories.

Gustafsson (2019) argues that imagination is an important part of the creation of associations, emotions and nostalgia. Further, she argues that marketers can use sound to create imagination. Grimshaw and Garner (2015) write that imagination is much stronger than our other senses and that we cannot disconnect it, and that by exposing consumers to a specific song or sound, marketers can make them imagine personal images. As mentioned, upon hearing the Intel sound logo, many of the respondents associated the sound with start-up sounds and

immediately imagined themselves sitting in front of the computer or gaming console. Again, as mentioned, several of these respondents also made nostalgic associations when hearing the sound, which makes Gustafsson's (2019) and Grimshaw and Garner's (2015) theories quite applicable in this case. Hartmann et al.'s (2019) theory on nostalgia marketing is about marketers trying to create enchantment through nostalgia, and that there are three ways to do this. One way is about how nostalgia can be both forward- and backward-looking. This could be quite relevant in Intel's case. As mentioned before, the Intel sound logo has a long history and, (again) as mentioned before, several respondents expressed nostalgic, old-school tech feelings from their childhoods, which can be seen as a backward-looking nostalgia.

- *"I get nostalgic feelings, and the feeling that I haven't heard this sound in a long time [...]. I kind of get the feeling that I'm turning on my computer ten years ago... it's like I'm being thrown back in time, which is always quite nice."* - Emma

Some respondents expressed getting feelings of innovation and forward-thinking when hearing the sound. One respondent even imagined himself in some kind of futuristic cyber-world. These emotions and associations could be interpreted as a form of forward-looking nostalgia.

- *"Some form of science-fiction world, maybe... blinking lights and... shining facades [...]. It feels like there's something in the sound that creates... thoughts of trust and future."* - Hannes

The respondent's nostalgic perceptions are in line with Hartmann et al.'s (2019) theory on nostalgia and enchantment, and it's also a possibility that this is precisely what Intel intends the consumers to connect the sound logo to. One respondent had an opinion that stood out from the others, in an interesting way. While she did, like the majority, experience the tune as positive and tech-sounding, she mostly connected it to starting up a computer in preparation for a long work day, filled with technical difficulties. This made her experience feelings such as worry and irritation. In the last part of the interview, the respondents were asked if they thought that the sound matched their perception of the brand. The majority thought that the sound and brand matched well. When they were told what brand the sound belonged to, few seemed surprised, except for the ones who didn't know Intel from before. When we explained Intel to them, they thought it matched the sound. The general opinion was that the computer-made sound of the tune matched Intel well, and also that the positive and playful yet serious nature of the sound was a good match. Also, when asked, most said that their initial opinion on the sound hadn't changed much since being told what brand it belongs to. They thought that the positive signals were still there in the same way, although some seemed a bit let-down that the sound wasn't connected to a more "fun" brand.

- *"I got a technology feeling right from the start. I was thinking of news, cellphones and technology. When I think about Intel, I think about tech. I think that my initial thoughts on the sound are about the same as the thoughts I have now."* - Jonathan

This can be connected to Krishna's (2010) theory on sensory branding. She writes that advertisement music can trigger emotions and affect consumer behaviour, and that the music is usually intended to be in synergy with, and to strengthen the advertisement's message or meaning. It's, arguably, likely that Intel chose this specific sound logo to evoke positive feelings among consumers, in an attempt to link the brand, as a whole, to positivity and happiness. It's also likely that Intel tries to mediate positivity, playfulness and innovation with their sound logo, as that's a common trait in the tech business. As mentioned, every single one of the respondents connected Intel's sound logo to the tech business. Many of the respondents expressed the sound as happy-, playful- and forward-thinking-sounding and agreed that the sound logo was in symbiosis with their perception of Intel as a brand. This means that Krishna's (2010) theory is quite applicable on the Intel sound logo, as it succeeds in evoking general feelings of positivity and happiness, and is also successful in mediating a message full of tech-"vibes", and innovation. Of course, it's possible that this is not what Intel intended. Perhaps the point of the sound logo is to mediate seriousness? Actually, one of the respondents felt that the Intel sound logo wasn't a good fit. He thought the tune to be childish and ridiculous, and not very fitting for a company he perceived as quite serious.

4.4 Comparing the characteristics of the sound logos

Analyzing sound logos is an important part of understanding sonic branding, but it may be difficult and time consuming. We therefore propose businesses that intend on improving or designing a sound logo in a cost-efficient manner to be cognizant of the characteristics that Jackson (2003) argues lead to a successful brand.

As described earlier; the sound logos are successful at evoking emotions, but do they cause associations that are beneficial to the brand? Jackson (2003) describes four characteristics that he argues are crucial for a brand to be successful; distinction, memorability, flexibility and honesty. As the word 'success' can be interpreted in many ways, and the chosen brands undoubtedly are successful, it is useful to determine what definition is used in this context. We choose to define success, in the context of sound logos, to be whether it efficiently communicates emotions and associations that benefit the brand, thus having a positive effect on the brands' image. Additionally, we choose to view success as a scale where a brand can either be more or less successful.

So, are BMW's, Hornbach and Intel's sound logos successful? By using the four characteristics given by Jackson (2003), we are able to form an opinion and a score based on literature and that can be rationalized using arguments and results from our research. The brands' sound logos will earn a point for each one of the characteristics defined by Jackson (2003) they possess, with an exception of distinction; which is divided into two points to include recognition.

Beginning with distinction; as we found evidence that points to all three sound logos being recognizable, the question shifts to whether the sound logos are able to distinguish themselves from competitors. Most respondents were able to either directly recognize the brand or industry

from its corresponding sound logo. The brand that stands out is BMW. The sound logo was described as cinematic, scary and epic, but it was not correlated to a specific industry or brand.

- *“It feels like it is some kind of, that it is some kind of factory feeling. I am thinking of a factory.” - Ylva*

It is difficult to pinpoint exactly why this was the case - the respondents found it industrial, after all. It may be the case that the automobile industry is combined with similar industries and is therefore not distinct in the general public's mind. Furthermore, it is difficult to either prove or disprove whether the BMW sound logo is distinct or similar to competitors as we do not have any data to support it. The fact that BMW's sound logo was not associated with the automobile industry may, however, point towards the sound logo being unique but it is unclear whether this has positive effects or not. This is the case with Hornbach as well, although some respondents were able to associate the sound logo with the corresponding brand or industry. With Intel, all the respondents were able to identify the sound logo as a brand associated with technology. This does not give us more insight into how well the brands are able to distinguish themselves from competitors and as we lack data to unequivocally rank the brands on their distinction, none of them earn a point. It does, however, display that they are able to project an image that is honest or 'on-brand'.

In most cases; the respondents associated both Intel and Hornbach's sound logos with the corresponding brand or industry, with an exception. Emma and Victoria associated Hornbach's sound logo with gambling or betting businesses.

- *“It feels like it is one of those betting businesses. Yes, it is some kind of advertisement, I think.” - Emma*

In Emma's case, this had a detrimental effect on her perception of the sound logo and will be discussed in further detail later. For now, we will focus on the rest of the respondents. The rest of the respondents associated Hornbach's sound logo either directly to the brand, home-improvement industry or an advertisement.

- *“Oh, is this not one of those construction things, like Hornbach or something?” - Ylva*

We found this surprising as the sound logo has been in use for a long time and as the company is one of the largest hardware and home-improvement companies in Sweden, it poses a question that can be summarized using the classical euphemism, the question of 'the chicken or the egg'. That is; do the respondents associate the sound logo with hardware because of the sound logo itself, or does the sound logo encapsulate emotions that are generally associated with hardware? In either case, Hornbach's sound logo is, according to our data, honest thus earning them a point. The case of Emma, however, and her perceived correlation between gambling, betting and Hornbach's sound logo forces us to remove half a point as if our sample was to be extrapolated to represent the population of individuals between the ages of 20 to 30; it is unlikely that she is alone. When it comes to the case of Intel, all respondents associated the

sound logo with technology in some capacity and the respondent Jonathan B summarized the general perception quite well:

- *“I associate it immediately with Intel and it feels like it fits their, well, graphical image.” - Jonathan B*

The respondents gave examples of associations that we found were on-brand for a company like Intel, for example: technology, computers and work, thus earning them a point for honesty. With BMW’s sound logo, on the other hand, it is more difficult to determine whether it is honest or not. As discussed earlier; some respondents associated the sound logo with industry in general, and not specifically the automobile industry, but when we revealed that it was in fact BMW’s sound logo, they typically agreed that it was fitting, except the respondent Emma. She perceived the sound logo in a negative light which she did not feel reflected her view of BMW, as it was a positive one. We therefore choose to give BMW half a point for honesty as in most cases, their sound logo was perceived as honest.

Continuing with flexibility, which is defined by communicating a consistent message to different audiences. As discussed earlier, not every brand managed to do this. Although all brands were largely successful, there was at least one ‘outlier’ perception of BMW and Hornbach, we choose to interpret this as the sound logos could have been more successful with their flexibility as their sound logos were not perceived in a consistent manner. This results in us giving them half a point each, while Intel earns a whole point for flexibility.

Memorability is the last characteristic that Jackson (2003) proposes leads to a successful brand. BMW does not score a point here, as none of the respondents recognised the sound logo at all. In both Intel and Hornbach’s case, the absolute majority did recognise the sound logos, and two respondents were actually able to correlate both Intel and Hornbach with their respective sound logos, thus earning them a point each.

So, where does this leave the total score? The results are presented in the table below:

| Brand: | Recognition: | Distinction: | Flexibility: | Memorability: | Honesty: | Total score: |
|---------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|----------------------|-----------------|---------------------|
| BMW | 1 | 0 | 0.5 | 0 | 0.5 | 2 |
| Hornbach | 1 | 0 | 0.5 | 1 | 0.5 | 3 |
| Intel | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 4 |

Table 2 - Brand scores.

Source: Authors’ own elaboration.

The brand with the most successful sound logo is Intel. They score a point in every category with an exception for distinction, as a result of lacking data to make any claims regarding whether they are, or are not able to distinguish themselves from competitors.

5.0 Discussion

Most likely, music and sound technology will continue to evolve, alongside with other technological advances. This, in turn, may lead to new ways to utilize sound for marketing purposes. As mentioned, the entrance of smart portable devices led to a core change in the way we consume music and in turn presented marketers with new ways to reach the consumer with sound. This shift in turn led to various challenges in how to properly use sound in marketing in order to “touch” the consumer at the same time as to avoid being perceived as intrusive. The future use for sonic branding is still unknown and there are many possible outcomes in how we in a foreseeing future can expect to be exposed to and consume music. As sound technology continues to advance the extent in which we consume music and sound will rise. As practically every consumer today can access music and sound through smartphones so must to be the case for marketers. Therefore, it becomes essential to give sonic branding the attention it deserves - both from a marketer's and academic's perspective.

5.1 Implications for marketers

Our results show that sound does, indeed, generate emotions and associations and most respondents experienced emotions that could be predicted by music theory. This points to the fact that sound and music can be an effective tool for marketers, but it should be used with caution. According to our study, there is, in some cases, a fine line between positive and negative emotions, which for example is the case with BMW. The BMW sound logo is played with a brass horn, which (according to Bruner 1990), can bring forth feelings of either triumph or grotesqueness, which likely evoked the respondents' mixed feelings of either unpleasantness or epicness. This emphasizes the need for consistency, or as Jackson (2003) refers to it; flexibility. It is important to recognize that not every consumer will interpret and internalize sounds in the same way. Because once recognized; it is possible for marketers to study and analyze the possible effects of a sound in order to minimize the potential negative emotional experiences.

Hornbach was also perceived by more than one respondent in a negative fashion. Hornbach utilized an a capella choir which added a human element to the sound which may have had a positive effect on the consumer's ability, or willingness, to internalize their message. Their sound logo is also written in a major scale and when analyzed in isolation, is a positive sound. However, their catchy and happy emotional message is translated by some consumers to a sound experience that is associated with betting. Hornbach's sound logo was largely successful in transforming something that may be viewed in a negative way, home-fixing et cetera, to a positive experience. There were, however, issues with consistency in the way consumers perceived it. The association between their sound logo and the betting business had a

detrimental effect on the consumer's perception of the sound which further emphasizes the importance of flexibility. Intel's sound logo was also generally perceived as positive. One respondent, Ylva, associated technology with long work-days and technical difficulties, which she considered negative. This may point to the fact that there are always going to be some consumers that associate sounds with negative emotions and it is the marketers mission to try to control what those negative emotions are, and minimize their effect on the consumer's brand experience.

One important implication for marketers could be that, while it's still important for the sound logo to cohere with the relevant industry, it's important to be unique and distinguishable. Perhaps Intel's sound logo is too generically tech-sounding and, therefore, fails to stand out? For example, every single one of the respondents associated Intel's sound logo with the tech business, but only one could actually link it to Intel. The case could possibly be that, as consumers do not associate the sound logo with Intel specifically, it may also benefit their competitors as, for example, AMD utilizes a similar sounding logo. The issue of similar sound logos is, furthermore, highlighted if the brand were to become a victim of sound hijacking. Meaning that competing organizations or businesses may use similar sound logos with the intention of exploiting the recognizability of the larger brand. This may also become an increasingly urgent issue if the brand that exploits the larger company's sound logo, for example Intel, does not represent values that are endorsed by the larger company.

As we can see; sound logos are important to communicate emotions and associations and it is important to be cognizant of how different individuals interpret and internalize these sounds. Sound logos can also be utilized to change and enhance brand experiences; our results show that connecting sounds to products or places of cultural significance may be an important, if not crucial, aspect of marketing in the future. As consumers are likely to form memories during the consumption of a product or service; facilitating positive emotions may have a large effect on the perception of a brand.

For marketers, the challenge is to make sure that the consumer's imagination is of a positive nature; which partly could be accomplished through the use of sound logos. The consumer's imagination could act as a relationship between themselves and the brand and may affect the frequency of consumption as well as the experience. Further challenges include changing the consumer's perception of negative experiences to positive, not only is the imagination and emotions evoked important; the timing is also vital. Sound logos can be used in many different places, such as starting a car or entering a retail store, and if the timing is off; the consumer may perceive it in a negative manner. Platforms, such as Netflix, are an example of successful timing of sound logos; the consumer makes an autonomous decision of when to use the service and as it is associated with leisure, the sound logo may evoke positive emotions. Advertisement breaks are an example of unsuccessful timing; if a consumer is viewing a video on YouTube, for example; the advertisement acts as a block, and detracts from the positive, leisure activity that the consumer was engaging in thus evoking feelings of irritation. This could have negative effects on the perception of a brand and rather than attract consumers, it may deter them instead.

Marketers therefore need to be wary of what touchpoints they utilize to communicate with the consumer so as to not be perceived in an intruding manner.

Most notably, in the case of Intel tune, connections were made to the start-up of a computer or, in some cases, gaming consoles. Interestingly enough, Intel has nothing to do with either of the two associations. Meaning, Intel produces microprocessors and other hardware that's on the inside of computers and gaming consoles, but has nothing to do with the visual or auditory start-up experience. To clarify, the Intel tune, as far as we know, is not played in any start-up moment. Instead, the intel tune has been used by the company as a strategic sound tool to mediate a certain brand image towards consumers. In other words, most likely using the sound logo through various commercial touchpoints, such as radio or TV. As we've already discussed, a touchpoint-oriented strategy might result in the consumer perceiving the sound as intruding - which did not happen with Intel. Arguably, the reason for this is that several respondents associated the sound with personal memories, rather than associating the sound with a commercial character. If so, this would arguably strengthen Gustafsson's (2019) thesis regarding the value of using platforms rather than the more traditional use of touchpoints. In the Intel case, all the respondents who associated the sound with the start-up of a computer or gaming console, connected the sound to a personal memory which they also had a personal connection to. This, arguably, being the core when discussing Gustafsson's (2019) more consumer-oriented sonic branding approach. That is, focusing on building a relation between the sound and consumer rather than the modifying of the sound itself to promote certain types of behaviors. In this scenario, the memory of the start-up of a computer can be regarded as the link between sound and consumer - in this case arguably the foundation for the relationship.

While the timing is vital, and difficult to get right; Jackson (2003) argues that consumers need to be exposed to a sound logo frequently over a long period of time to be able to associate it with the brand. Although more difficult in the past, brands need to find a way to integrate themselves into consumers' lives. Technology has made the process easier as many individuals in contemporary society own a variety of devices and appliances that are capable of creating or playing sounds. Apple, and smartphones in general, have successfully integrated themselves into consumers' lives with relatively good timing. Consumers choose to utilize the devices and appliances themselves as they work to simplify- or make their everyday lives easier in general. The sonic branding therefore occurs naturally, with good timing (ringtones, for example), which may be a reason as to why they have been so successful as brands.

When we conducted the interviews, we noticed that several respondents experienced nostalgic feelings when hearing the sounds. Especially Intel, but also Hornbach. For example, one respondent had never even heard of Intel before, but still perceived the sound logo as so nostalgic, that she started searching among her personal experiences to be able to connect something to the sound. This is an implementation to marketers - nostalgia can be a powerful marketing tool, and a sound logo that succeeds at evoking nostalgic emotions among consumers might prove to be a valuable asset. This could be a possibility for brands, to be able to recycle and utilize defunct sounds that have already been connected to positivity, by consumers. It would be cost efficient and require a smaller budget cut, there is a level of

certainty as a result of previous knowledge and, additionally, it may be even more successful as a level of nostalgia may arise. This is likely a reason that Intel have kept their sound logo for such a long time - it has proven to be successful, likely partly due to its nostalgic “vibes”, and because of the previously mentioned reasons, there’s no reason for Intel to change it.

As our results show; sonic branding can be an effective tool of consumer communication and to facilitate brand experiences. But why does not every company or organisation utilize it? The answer may lie with the complexity of sonic branding, and that some businesses simply do not have a sufficiently large budget to include it. Successful sonic branding does not just include a catchy jingle, it arguably requires a broader view, acknowledging the consumer as a co-creator of the sonic identity. Our study indicates that sonic branding is best used when focusing on consumer experiences, using sound as a link between consumers and brands forming a relationship.

5.2 Implications for society

Sonic branding is not only of use for marketers. It can be used by consumers to understand and subsequently adjust to advertising and marketing. Understanding how you respond emotionally to certain sounds does not only help individuals become more emotionally aware, it allows them to recognize emotions and what may have caused them. Thus individuals may be able to, for example, avoid platforms that cause stress and therefore, perhaps improve their general well-being.

Even though sonic branding is a well established practise, and practically every company makes use of it (whether or not they are aware of it), there hasn’t been much research done on the subject. This makes it hard for sonic branding to be taught - even though it’s an important part of marketing, it’s not being taught in any marketing courses at Swedish universities (at least to our knowledge). We think it could be a very interesting and quite meaningful part of marketing courses. Perhaps the studies could even be interdisciplinary, and the studies could be done together with music schools and psychology university departments. We argue, for sonic branding to be able to be taught effectively, there should be some form of framework - a more uniform, overall picture of the subject. Apart from showing how to use sonic branding as a marketing strategy, it's important to demonstrate the importance of sound and music theory and how it affects our minds, and alternative ways of using sounds to create an experience for the consumer.

6.0 Concluding remarks

When trying to provide an answer as to how the chosen sound logos affect consumers, we find that there are multiple factors to include, that partly have an effect, thus providing a clear and concise answer is difficult. Instead, the answer lies within a holistic perspective that provides a more comprehensive picture which takes both the consumer and the brand into account. Most consumers have unique experiences that have an effect on how they perceive sounds and what associations they make when hearing them. Regardless if the sound or genre is the same, how consumers internalize or translate the sounds to emotions may differ greatly, it is therefore important that marketers are cognizant of how their message may come across.

The data collected during this study seem to indicate that pre-existing experiences of brands affect the emotional responses and associations evoked by sound logos. In cases where the projected emotions and values do not correspond to the pre-existing perception of a brand, a sense of insecurity seems to arise. Sonic branding could therefore be used, instead, to facilitate and nurture a relationship between the brand and consumers.

With the benefit of hindsight, there are a few things that are still left for future researchers or that can be improved in future studies. We suggest that future studies use a more deductive approach when designing their interview guides as we feel that the interviews may generate data with increased relevance and utility. A closer look at the difference between sound logos within certain industries with a larger selection of brands is something that may provide useful conclusions for the concerned industries. As this study only analyzes three sound logos it is possible, although perhaps unlikely, that our results are random and, for example; music theory is not able to predict emotional responses as accurately as described in this study.

In summary; the benefits of studying sonic branding are greater when focusing on the relationship between the consumer and brand, and how sounds can be used to facilitate it.

List of references

- Alvesson, Mats & Sköldböck, Kaj (2008) *Tolkning och reflektion – vetenskapsfilosofi och kvalitativ metod Studentlitteratur*, Lund, Sweden.
- Anand, P. & Sternthal, B. (1990). Ease of Message Processing as a Moderator of Repetition Effects in Advertising. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 27(3), 345-353.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/002224379002700308>
- Bell, Emma; Bryman, Alan and Harley, Bill. (2019) *Business research methods*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, UK.
- Brownell, W. E. (1997). How the Ear Works - Nature's Solutions for Listening. *NCBI*. 99(5): 9–28.
- Bruner, G. C. (1990) Music, mood and marketing. *Journal of Marketing*. 54(4), 94–104.
- Brunk, K., Giesler, M., and B.J. Hartmann. (2017). *Creating a Consumable Past: How Memory Making Shapes Marketization*. *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol.44 (6), 1325-1342.
- Bull, M. (2007). *Sound Moves: iPod Culture and Urban Experience*. New York: Routledge.
- Donovan, R. J. & Rossiter, J. R. (1982). Store Atmosphere: An Environmental Psychology Approach. *Journal of Retailing*, 58(1), 34-57. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0022-4359\(94\)90037-X](https://doi.org/10.1016/0022-4359(94)90037-X)
- Fulberg, P. (2003). Using sonic branding in the retail environment - An easy and effective way to create consumer brand loyalty while enhancing the in-store experience. *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*, 193-198.
- Gilliland, N. (2018). *Science of sound: How music makes advertising more memorable*. Econsultancy. 7 August. <https://econsultancy.com/science-of-sound-how-music-makes-advertising-more-memorable/> [2021-04-28]
- Grimshaw, M., and T. Garner. (2015). *Sonic Virtuality: Sound as Emergent Perception*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Gustafsson, C. (2015). Sonic branding: A consumer-oriented literature review. *Journal Of Brand Management*, 22(1), 20-37. doi: 10.1057/bm.2015.5
- Gustafsson, C. (2019). Sonic Branding: From Brand Image to Brand Imagination. *The Oxford Handbook of Sound and Imagination*, 1,1-17. doi: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190460167.013.18
- Harvey, E. (2017). *Networked Listening: How the way we listen helps delineate the public-private divide*. Real Life. 5 April. <https://reallifemag.com/networked-listening/> [2021-05-20]

- Hartmann, B.J. & Brunk, K.H. (2019). Nostalgia marketing and (re-)enchantment. *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 36(4), 669-686. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijresmar.2019.05.002>
- Holt, D.B. & Cameron, D. (2010). *Cultural Strategy: Using Innovative Ideologies to Build Breakthrough Brands*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Holt, D. B. (2004.) *How Brands Become Icons: The Principles of Cultural Branding*. Boston: Harvard Business Press.
- Jackson, D. (2003). *Sonic Branding: An Introduction*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Jingel. (n.d.). *Nationalencyklopedin*. <https://www.ne.se/uppslagsverk/encyklopedi/lång/jingel> [2021-04-28]
- Kan, M. (2020). *Intel Is Changing Its Logo and Iconic, Five-Note Bong Sound*. PCMag. 2 September. <https://uk.pcmag.com/chipsets-processors/128453/intel-is-changing-its-logo-and-iconic-five-note-bong-sound> [2021-05-16]
- Kilian, K. (2009). *From Brand Identity to Audio Branding*. In *Audio Branding: Brands, Sound and Communication*. Munich: Verlag Reinhard Fischer.
- Krishna, A. (2010). *Sensory Marketing: Research On the Sensuality of Products*. New York. Routledge. :Pearson Prentice Hall
- Milliman, R. E. (1982). Using Background Music to Affect the Behavior of Super- market Shoppers. *Journal of Marketing*, 46(3), 86–91.
- Music Theory Academy (n.d.) *The Major Scale*. <https://www.musictheoryacademy.com/understanding-music/the-major-scale/> [2021-05-04]
- Nica, G. (2013). *BMW Introduces New Sound Logo*. Autorevolution. 19 March. <https://www.autoevolution.com/news/bmw-introduces-new-sound-logo-video-56578.html> [2021-05-20]
- Parncutt, R. (2014). The emotional connotations of major versus minor tonality: One or more origins? *Musicae Scientiae*, 18(3), 324–353.
- Raven and Finch. (2017). *95% recognition for the Hornbach soundlogo*. <https://www.ravenandfinch.com/journal/95-recognition-for-the-hornbach-soundlogo/> [2021-04-20]
- Smit & Van Wyk (n.d.). *The Harley-Davidson Sound Trademark*. <https://www.svw.co.za/the-harley-davidson-sound-trademark/> [2021-05-18]

Appendix 1 - Interview guide

The interview guide is partly structured, as it is divided into five separate parts whose order is required to be followed. As discussed in the methodology chapter; the questions within each section are, however, not important, and only serves as example questions to move the conversation forward.

Part 1 - Introduction

- Begin with introducing ourselves and why we are conducting this interview.

Part 2 - Introducing the sounds. Connecting to emotions, associations and perceived meaning.

Example questions:

- Do you recognize this sound?
- What is the first thing that comes to mind when you hear the sound?
- Do you associate the sound with anything?
- Does the sound evoke any emotions in you?
- What do you think the sound is trying to convey?
- Do you think the sound is successful in conveying these emotions or associations?

Part 3 - Comparing played sounds.

- When comparing the sounds that have been played for you, does any of them stand out?
 - Do they have anything in common?
 - Which sounds convey their values and image in the best way?
- If you were to choose two opposite sounds, which would you pick?

Part 4 - Comparing sounds with brand perception - Revealing the brands

- When knowing the brand behind the sound, do you think the sound and brand image correspond? From a personal view.
- Has your initial perception of the sound changed?
- What's your perception of the brand?
- What would happen if we were to change the sound logos with corresponding brands? How would you perceive the sound and brand?

Part 5 - Wrapping up.

- Is there anything you would like to add?
- Is there anything we have forgotten to bring up?

Part 6 - Concluding interview.

- Thanking the respondent for participating.

Appendix 2 - Transcripts from conducted interviews

Please note links to interviews are embedded.

| |
|-------------------------|
| Emma - Transcript |
| Hannes - Transcript |
| Ylva - Transcript |
| Gunilla - Transcript |
| Jonathan B - Transcript |
| Johan - Transcript |
| Jonathan - Transcript |
| Hugo - Transcript |
| Victoria - Transcript |
| Jakob - Transcript |