

## Executive Summary

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### **Effects of Acoustic Stimuli Complementing Out-Of-Home Advertising**

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Consumers are being exposed to an ever-growing number of promotional offers. Therefore, innovative communication measures are required to deliver advertising messages to potential customers effectively. The present work investigates the interaction of acoustic and visual stimuli of an advertising campaign in the out-of-home arena. Recent developments in the use of digital media in marketing communication make this topic particularly relevant.

From a conceptual point of view this paper builds on the one hand upon neural research on human information processing, most prominently on the theory developed by Engelkamp (1991). On the other hand, this paper applies the principle of integrated communication as proposed by Kroeber-Riel (1993) for the case of a multisensual experience provided by simultaneous visual and acoustic promotional stimuli. Research hypotheses established this way propose favorable effects of integrated visual and acoustic stimuli which might, however, also generate perceived ad intrusiveness mitigating these positive effects.

Empirical investigations evolved from a cooperation with two companies (one which hires out space for out-of-home advertising and a producer of dairy products). In more detail, two quantitative field experiments examined the effects of the two types of sounds on a poster of a real out-of-home advertising campaign for a dairy product (i.e., a yogurt) in a down-town public area. For the current investigation, we equipped a citylight with a (mini-) computer, a motion sensor and a speaker assembled in a box located at the top of the citylight. Passers-by are exposed the poster and one of two sounds (a verbal slogan or alternatively, a sound which can be heard when eating the yogurt) or only the poster. Means of observation (Study 1) and communication (Study 2) measured the resulting effects in terms of attention, brand recognition, ad intrusiveness, and attitude toward the brand, and the findings result from the comparison between the three experimental groups.

As one main positive result the attention-generating property of acoustic stimuli stands out; furthermore, attention for the poster could be generated even for passers-by who did not see the poster, i.e., those who approached the poster from behind. At the same time, these stimuli were perceived as being intrusive by many subjects. In addition, for the product under investigation, the verbal slogans outperformed the sound of eating. For brand recognition and attitude toward the brand, we find positive effects of the verbal slogan, however, they are not statistically significant.

From a management perspective, balancing the advantage of attention generated by acoustic stimuli against the disadvantage of possibly creating an impression of intrusion appears as a crucial matter. Therefore, we propose adding auditory elements to out-of-home advertising in certain environmental or content-specific situations only and tailoring the integration to the setting carefully. As an example, potential visitors to a concert are presumably more receptive to content-integrated background sounds than the general public. Another example could be a poster for a charity project in which involvement is quite different from the situation investigated in this study (i.e., grocery). Auditory cues might help to evoke sympathy in this case. Even public product sampling bear potential when being accompanied by acoustic signals in order to increase attention. Acoustic cues might also be especially suitable for semi-public places like airports, train stations, shopping malls or within a store, or even for online retailing.