Audio identity in branding and brand communication strategy: a systematic review of the literature on audio branding

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Abstract

Brand creation and management has undergone a substantial change in recent years as a result of new communication strategies, adaptation to the digital transmedia paradigm, and interaction with consumers. The use of an audio identity as a variable in this architecture and its inclusion in the different points of contact with consumers has generated a growing interest in audio branding. This article responds to the need to establish a conceptual basis and the state of the art in order to advance in the in-depth study of the discipline through a systematic review of the literature. This review was carried out in the *Web of Science* databases for the 2011–2020 period. After the initial filtering, a total of 36 articles were analysed and divided into four areas of relevance: phonetics in brand names, audiovisual advertising and branding, local city or country branding, and political branding.

Keywords

Audio branding; Audio communication; Audiovisual advertising; Advertising; Music; Sound; Branding; Brands; City branding; Country branding; Political branding; Audio; Sound identity; Systematic review.

1. Introduction

The strategic use of sound by brands is a practice that is growing at an exponential rate. In the past, brands were born mute and focused their efforts on other elements of communication. As a result of the constant overexposure of advertising stimuli and the over-saturation of offerings, brands have been forced to investigate new inputs that allow them to stand out. Among these inputs, we find the use of sonic logos, brand voices, music created ad hoc, increasingly identifiable product sounds and even advertisements based on an assortment of all these. This is not the spontaneous and unplanned use of a song in an advertisement, or the use of a trending band in a campaign. This is the generation of an audio identity comparable to the consolidation of a logo, a colour or a corporate typography (**Vidal-Mestre**, 2018).

We understand sound branding as:

> "The process of forming an emotional connection between transmitter and receiver through sound, an associative anchor of recognition, communication of messages, image transfer and image consolidations" (**Spehr**, 2009, p. 27).

Consequently, sound branding as a discipline is:

> "set of strategically planned sound stimuli that serve as an intangible and expressive variable for a brand, enhancing its identification and differentiation and reinforcing its permanence in the minds of consumers thanks to its emotional aspect" (**Vidal-Mestre**, 2017, p. 57).

Thus, sound branding is the part of branding that strategically analyses and exploits the power of sound in the generation, administration, and positioning of brand communication (**Jackson**, 2003; **Minsky**; **Colleen**, 2017).

In this sense, one of the branding elements that brands tend to use to generate emotional ties with consumers is

> "the subtle introduction of key visuals or key audials, that is, visual or auditory elements that allow the brand to be identified" (**Freire**, 2017, p. 85).

All these sound elements are of great interest for the study of this interdisciplinary field where sound, music and advertising converge. And in order to understand them properly, the published scientific literature on the subject should be taken into account.

The generation and dissemination of scientific knowledge in any field is a common task for any researcher. To do so, it is essential to be aware of the studies, procedures, selection processes and criteria followed by predecessors (**Hernández-González**; **Reverter-Masia**; **Jové-Deltell**, 2017). Systematic reviews respond to this need by synthesising findings from the analysis of primary studies (**Siddaway**; **Wood**; **Hedges**, 2019). In other words, they seek to detect the current state of a given topic within a chosen field in order to establish guidelines for future research (**Morales** *et al*., 2017).

Therefore, this article aims to determine the specific role that music and sound have had in audio branding and how researchers have reflected it in journals indexed in the *Web of Science* databases between 2011 and 2020. Two specific objectives are also set:

- to categorise and describe the scientific production published on this subject in the selected database during the reference period; and
- to synthesise the evidence reported in the scientific literature on the subject in question. In doing so, knowledge in this field is updated and reaffirmed.

These objectives try to answer the following research questions:

- What have been the main objectives pursued by researchers around the object of study?
- What methodology has been followed?
- What have been the main results?
- What are the implications that these investigations have raised?

2. Methodology

A systematic review was carried out of articles published in journals indexed in the *Science Citation Index* (*SCI*) and *Social Sciences Citation Index* (*SSCI*) databases that are part of the *Web of Science Core Collection*. For such journals *Clarivate*, the company that produces them, calculates the so-called impact factors, which are published in the *Journal Citation Reports* (*JCR*) numerical database. The Journal Impact Factor (JIF) is the quality indicator of scientific publications best valued by researchers (**Calderón-Garrido**; **Gustems-Carnicer**, 2018), since it is linked to the prestige, the international impact of publications and to a presumption of extraordinary quality due both to *Clarivate*'s rigorous journals selection to be indexed, and by the original manuscript selection of the journals themselves. Although these databases have a certain linguistic and geographic bias towards English-speaking countries, this does not substantially affect the objective of this research.

The systematic review was conducted using articles published in the last ten years (2011-2020), by combining the keywords or descriptors (Branding AND Sound) OR (Branding AND Music). These were selected due to a previous search among the titles, keywords, and abstracts of the most cited articles in sound branding in these ten years. In this way, it was possible to corroborate the repetitive appearance of the descriptors used to the detriment of other synonyms or references to the sound event (like the voice or sound effects). Access to *WoS* was carried out via the web portal of the *Spanish Foundation for Science and Technology* (*Fecyt*). The entire process, the results of the reviews and meta-analyses, followed the indications of the protocol designed in the *Preferred reporting items for systematic reviews and meta-analyses* (*Prisma*) (**Hutton**; **Catalá-López**; **Moher**, 2016).

> "After a content analysis, four domains were established for the scientific literature: phonetics in brand names, audiovisual advertising and branding, local city and country branding and ideological branding"

For the analysis, the first step was to scrub the data provided by the platform itself by including the descriptors in the thematic area. All articles were reviewed individually in order to extract each of the results shown. Thus, in the period 2011–2020, 472 papers were published with the above-mentioned descriptors and included in the main collection of *Web of Science* (*SCI*, *SSCI*, *A&HCI*, *CPCI-S*, *CPCI-SSH*, *BKCI-S*, *BKCI-SSH* and *ESCI*). The time limitation is due to a clear increase in the number of investigations related to the object of study, starting in 2011. Of these, 161 were indexed in the *SCI* and *SSCI* databases, of which only 92 belonged to the "article" or "review" category. These 92 articles were independently reviewed by two researchers looking for material relevant to the central theme of the research. The main reason for discarding some of the articles that were not subsequently analysed was the inclusion in the keywords of terminology related to audio branding (or music branding) but whose content did not correspond to the discipline under study here. In the event of a disagreement between the two researchers, a third was called in. Table 1 shows the inclusion and exclusion criteria used.

Table 1. Inclusion and exclusion criteria.

Criteria's inclusion	Criteria's exclusion
Research on sound branding, audio branding or musical branding. Those that focus the study in any social context are included.	Works that tangentially approach sound branding, audio branding or musical branding but do not use it as a central axis.
Languages: English or Spanish.	Languages: anyone other than English or Spanish.
Year of publication: period between 2011 and 2020.	Year of publication: any other outside the period between 2011 and 2020.
Document type: article or review.	Type of document: Books, minutes, congress chapters or letters.
Knowledge areas: all.	Duplications.

Finally, the sample analysed comprised 36 articles. Figure 1 shows the selection process carried out.

The analysis of the texts was carried out through the qualitative analysis software *Atlas.ti*, in its version 22. As a result, in addition to detecting the main aspects of each work, it was possible to extract a series of codes that interrelate and contextualise the investigations analysed.

3. Results

After a content analysis (**Porta**; **Silva**, 2003) of the abstracts and texts of the 36 articles, four domains were established for the scientific literature: phonetics in brand names (n= 14; 38.8%); audiovisual advertising and branding (n= 10; 27.7%); local city and country branding (n= 9; 25%), and political branding (n= 3; 8.5%). Figure 2 shows the evolution of the publications according to topics and years. Although no clear trend is detected, two significant moments can be seen: published works in 2015 and the ones published in 2020.

Regarding the methodology followed, the majority (58.3%) of the pieces were based on different sound analyses carried out by the researchers themselves, 27.8% analysed the reaction of a sample of participants, and 13.9% carried out a systematic review on different specific aspects.
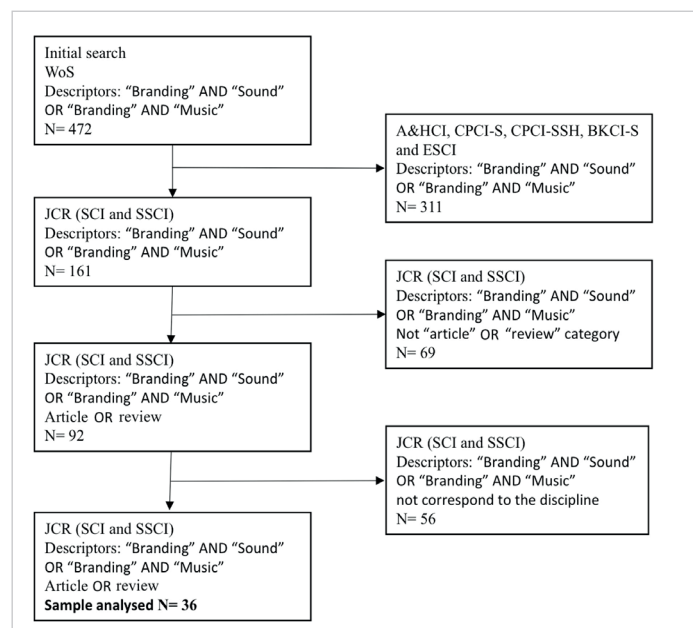

Figure 1. Flow chart for item selection

From a qualitative perspective, the main results of the content of these works are detailed below.

4. Phonetics in brand names

Based on the results obtained with the analysis, the study of brand naming has been a field that has been widely explored and exploited in communication sciences due to its influence and implication in the identity, positioning and even consumer behaviour towards a brand. Within this field, analysis of phonetics is one of the most frequent aspects.

In this regard, **Spence** (2012) systematic review of the use of sound and sound symbolism in food and drink brand names and how it affected consumers is revealing. Spence's work established a clear link between the sound of brands and consumer experiences. The author discovered how

Figure 2. Evolution of the works by year and theme

> "that sourness, bitterness, crunchiness, and carbonation, correspond crossmodally with angular shapes and sharper/harder plosive stop consonants as well as with higher-pitched frontal vowels. By contrast, sweet, still, and creamy food and beverage products appear to share a crossmodal correspondence with rounder shapes and speech sounds, as well as with back vowels" (**Spence**, 2012, p. 50).

The research by **Pogacar** *et al.* (2018), in which 78 participants were presented with a subset of 25 words drawn randomly from the group of ten decoys and 20 pairs of test words, established that certain sounds should be prioritised when creating brand names. This confirmed the importance of the phonetics of brand names on consumer preferences. However, his research was not as deep as that of **Spence** (2012), leaving with somewhat more superficial conclusions focused on demonstrating that consumers prefer common sounds such as "S", "M", "L" and "E" in the naming of brands. This fact is related to its ease of pronunciation and its familiarity.

Klink and **Wu** (2014) wanted to provide a more symbolic vision of the meaning of sound in the phonetics of brand names. In their research, 138 university business students analysed the name of some iconic brands, such as *NIKE*, and examined potential names for a new brand of cars. The findings showed that brand meaning can be conveyed by the sound symbolism embedded in the first or second syllables of the brand name. In addition, brand meaning is also better communicated by vowels than consonants and that the use of more than one imbed can better convey the meaning of a brand. A relevant contribution that, together with the previous articles, helps to configure a more global idea about the direct impact between sound and perception of a brand's personality.

The sound of brand names has therefore been linked to various elements. For example, **Ngo**, **Misra** and **Spence** (2011) aimed to assess how the names of chocolate brands are linked to the percentage of cocoa and milk they contain. Through three experiments, they found that words with rounded shapes and a lower pitch and softer sound were associated with milk chocolates (approx. 30% cocoa), while chocolates with a high cocoa content (70% to 90%) were associated with sharper, more angular calligraphic outlines.

More generally, **Favalli** *et al.* (2013) add to the literature with their research in which they discover an association between naming and certain sensory attributes, whereby a change in the name of a traditional brand in turn entails a transformation of perception in terms of appearance, smell, texture and even taste. **Pathak**, **Velasco** and **Spence** (2020b), on the other hand, years later, suggest a connection between sounds and tastes, pointing out how the presence of long vowels in some brand names generates expectations of sweeter tastes. In another study (**Pathak**; **Calvert**; **Lim**, 2020a) these authors discuss how consonants influence the sensation of clogging, roughness or smoothness referring to beers, skin cleanser, and toilet cleaner.

Other studies looked at how vowel length affects the transmission of pleasure or euphony and displeasure. In terms of its relationship with purchase intention, **Topolinski**, **Zürn** and **Schneider** (2015) argue that brands in which the consonant points of articulation are located in the innermost part of the mouth are preferred, as they seem to elicit greater purchase intent and even trigger a greater willingness to pay.

Despite the strong influence of the brand name on the consumer, studies such as those by **Round** and **Roper** (2015) consider that prior brand awareness also has a strong influence on the consumer. In their research they used an experimental approach with 100 English adults, who were given a choice between traditional branded products at an increased price and new branded products, albeit with names phonetically similar to the existing ones. Most participants in the experiment opted for the established brands.

In the field at hand, **Klink** and **Wu** (2017) studied the correspondence between the phonetics of a brand name and its ethical attribution. In their study, based on two perception tests applied to students, they found that there is a positive
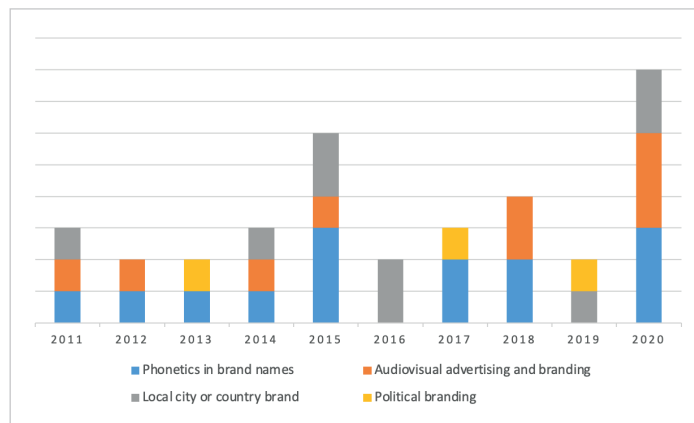
impact of higher frequency sounds and ethical consideration of brands. In the same way, other authors wanted to relate the topic to other aspects such as **Smith** (2017) who, for an identity study, analysed the similarities between band names, album titles and song titles in a sub-genre of indie and alternative rock music (shoegazing) in terms of their phonemes. The focus was on ono-

> The results obtained in this systematic review show a considerable amount of relevant precedents in the study of audio branding in the literature of the last decade

mastic similarities and phonemes (submorphemic sound/meaning pairs). Smith concluded that band names, especially in rock music, often evoke particular semantic spaces as an act of self-identity. These names adopted in particular the phonemes gl- or sn- in the onomastic title.

Finally, the research by **Pathak**, **Velasco** and **Spence** (2020) is very illuminating. In it they analysed the names of the main brands containing the phoneme "k", extending later to other phonemes such as "f" and "y". From here, several parallel studies were undertaken: 1) Comparing the results with those obtained by previous research of **Van-Doorn**, **Paton** and **Spence** (2016); 2) analysing the use of the phoneme "k" in everyday words and not in dictionary words; 3) applying the results of studies 1 and 2 to analyse the preferred names given to newborns in America between 2010 and 2016. The results showed that **Van-Doorn**, **Paton** and **Spence** (2016) only took into account the "k" and not phonemes that sounded like "k". Study 2 reported that the comparisons made with study 1 were problematic because the language was "old" and not up to date for everyday use. Finally, study 3 reported how baby names given by parents follow the same patterns as those in advertising.

In a context of internationalisation of products, another point of interest is the translation of brand names. For example, **Fetscherin** *et al*. (2015) reflect on English versions of Chinese brands and how such language adaptation can have an impact on the memorability, meaningfulness and likability of Chinese brands. They revealed that short names are more accepted and remembered, and that, in addition, their sonority has a direct impact on recallability and likeability.

Other authors took this study more generically: **Graakjær** and **Bonde** (2018) who analysed 99 articles focusing on non-musical sound, concluding that there were two areas for further research: non-musical atmospheres and non-musical sonic logos. In addition, they felt that future research on brand sounds should examine in more detail the potential of developed versus annexed object sounds, and mediated versus unmediated brand sounds.

In summary, the above studies reveal the importance of phonetics in brand names with respect to consumer experiences and preferences, on a symbolic or sensory level. Many of these studies focus on minimal units, phonemes or syllables, and take into account the sensory and symbolic attributions of their oral articulation (in the case of consonants) or the height or length of vowels, which is sometimes embodied in the complex etymological network of languages. Not surprisingly, many of these studies have focused on food products, where the mouth-based experience of taste may be linked in some way to the vocal experience of speech. Likewise, as it is a pleasurable experience associated with food, the relationship of sounds with emotions justifies our predilection for names or phonemes that are more comfortable, shorter and friendlier, and which make them easier to remember. All this has repercussions for the commercial purposes of brands and products, which seek to provoke greater purchase intent and better positioning in the market. Phonetics thus makes it possible to create particular semantic spaces as an act of self-identity.

5. Audiovisual advertising and branding

Analysis of the scientific literature shows that many authors have studied the influence of music in advertising, but it is also true that few of them have done so from a perspective of strategy. Until relatively recently, brands did not make planned use of the aspect of sound, basing their choice on more commercial parameters. Studies such as the one by **Eckhardt** and **Bradshaw** (2014) on the convergence between advertisers, musicians and producers in the selection and production of music for advertising are halfway between an isolated study and the globalised use of music in advertising, which we could more properly call sound or audio branding.

Other authors, however, did begin the study of sound branding as its discipline, based on the strategic use of sound to represent brands. Thus, **Brodsky** (2011) made an important contribution to the development of the discipline of audio branding, generating a research design that verified how consumers perceived certain characteristics of brands and their products through the music that accompanied them in their advertising. According to Brodsky, and following the same conception, **Herzog** *et al*. (2020) have developed an inventory of categories and adjectives that represent all aspects of brand identities that can be conveyed through music, facilitating communication between all experts in the sector of musical branding and observing their effectiveness.

Besides, **Graakjær** (2012) wanted to see how these effects directly influence retail and similar semi-public settings through a critical analysis of the music used in *Abercrombie & Fitch* (*A&F*). Specifically, he discusses three functions of music in *A&F*: an "architectural function", a "psychobiological function" and a "knowledge activation function".

Similarly, almost a decade later, **Lepa** *et al*. (2020) developed a computational model that would allow musical elements to be related to certain expressions and elements of brand image. More specifically, they looked at how rhythm, instrumentation and musical style were the sound attributes most strongly linked, and potentially manipulated, to relate to a brand image.

Many authors were then encouraged to analyse the effects of sound branding in particular spheres of communication: **Ballouli** and **Heere** (2015), in the world of sports communication, proposed a model based on the emotions of the intended audience of the music at the specific moment when they receive it. **Hallegatte**, **Ertz**

> The studies reveal the importance of phonetics in brand names with respect to consumer experiences and preferences, on a symbolic or sensory level

and **Marticotte** (2018) were interested in its application in brands considered retro, analysing the triangular relationship between retro brands, propensity for nostalgia and purchase intention. They were able to confirm this hypothesis thanks to an experiment with 181 subjects in which they manipulated the playlist and band line-up, and found that mixing the present and the past works and directly influences consumers' purchase intentions and willingness to pay for "retro" brands. Focusing on the environment, **Joshi** and **Kronrod** (2020) sought to investigate how the sound of certain brands conveyed respect for the environment in a metaphorical way. Through four different studies they tested this hypothesis, concluding that subtle differences in sounds can have a great influence on the communication of not only literal product attributes, but also of secondary metaphorical traits.

Another set of theorists chose to analyse specific elements of sound branding, such as the sonotype or audio logo or the covers. **Mas** *et al*. (2021) sought to determine how the acoustic/musical characteristics of sonic logos (in particular intensity, pitch and rhythm) based on instrumental melodies affect consumer response, attract attention, elicit levels of enjoyment and calm, and convey brand personality traits. To do so, they applied an experimental factorial design to measure emotional arousal in each subject (electrodermal activity) and improvement in perceptual processing (heart rate), as well as other self-reported factors, such as calmness/emotion, enjoyment and brand personality scales. The results obtained showed a significant increase in electrodermal activity associated with fast-paced sound logos and a decrease in heart rate for long, slow-paced sonic logos. In addition, fast, rising-pitched sound logos with increasing intensity have been defined as more exciting, while falling-pitched sound logos are more pleasant. In his Nietzsche-inspired philosophical essay, **Babich** (2018) considers the role of original and cover versions. He focused on "covers" of popular songs and analysed the language of "sonic branding" as a type of self-creation of the mass consumer which influences the transmission of music branding campaigns, to the point of preferring the copy to the original.

In short, brand advertising uses elements of sound to establish a better emotional link with the consumer, by identifying with the style, authors, versions or sonic logos used in audiovisual advertising. As these are audiovisual settings, studies have not focused on one type of product, but rather range from sports brands to clothing, analysing their sonic logos through classical analyses that consider certain qualities of sound (especially intensity and pitch) or elements of the music (such as style, instrumentation, form, melody, harmony or rhythm). The acoustic/musical characteristics of sonic logos can guide consumers' responses, affect their emotions, attract their attention and convey brand personality traits. All these characteristics apply both to audiovisual advertising productions and to the use of music in shops and semi-public environments. Again, this directly influences consumers' purchase intentions and willingness to pay.

6. Local city or country brand

The analysis of the systematic review carried out reports that another area where sound has started to become relevant is that of local brand personality, whether that be for a city or a country. This field is closely related to tourism studies and touches on a number of other fields such as politics, local economy, history and culture.

Some of the studies focused on specific countries, such as **Pier** (2011) who relates the social and political use of African musical rituals to the commercial use of music in advertising. To this end, he analysed the dances and music of the *Senator National Cultural Extravaganza* traditional music competition to promote an African beer of the same name (*Senator Extra Lager*). The results showed that, in Africa, the use of musical traditions in the branding of companies helps to bring products closer to a larger number of consumers. **Trainer** (2015) looked to analyse how Australia's national music culture was strongly linked to the popularity of indie rock and how even today this musical style continues to be used both as a lure and as a tool for record labels and the media in the country.

Another contribution in this area is the investigation of **Lee** (2015) who in Korea found that the promotion and subsequent disappearance of the *Dynamic Korea* slogan was linked to both the semantic ambiguity of the sound "dynamic" and also the powerful sound registers that forced re-evaluations of other aspects seemingly unrelated to music: a country's national branding campaign. Years later, in 2018, **Kim** and **Lee** investigated how and why Korean classical musicians have collaborated with the government to promote national pride and project a positive image of Korea internationally, with the support of private corporations and a new government agenda ("*K-Classic*"). **Fung** (2016) explored how China has designed strategies for its various creative industries, including music, film, animation and online games, through a cultural branding policy at both the national and international level. Through expert interviews, Fung found contradictions between the creative content generated by China's cultural industry and the censorship and control exercised by the regime's bureaucracy. Importing global content with a high market value can be seen as a government strategy designed to meet market needs and boost domestic creative industries with expertise drawn from abroad, but without relaxing ideological control over their content. **Haworth** (2019) wanted to be included in this group, and analysed the use of a popular music star, in this case Mina, to contribute to and enhance the brand narrative of Cremona, the star's ho-

metown. In 2018, the city made use of the iconic singer in its brand narrative when it organised a programme of events entitled "Cremona canta Mina", which generated a new narrative around the city's relationship with the star, helping to remake the city's image. On the other hand, and being one of the most recent studies, **Wheeler** (2020) aimed to explore how and why music played

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a key role in the success of the 1992 *Barcelona Olympics*. One conclusion was that the *Olympic Games* made the city of Barcelona a leading reference for international concert tours and made music a tourist attraction in the city. As well as **Isabelle** (2020), who wanted to contribute with a similar approach but focused on France's external projection, and contributed to the study of audio branding by countries by analysing how French institutions abroad use and disseminate French popular music to increase international influence. One of its evidences links the use of trendy music abroad to the renewal and modernisation of France's brand as a country.

In a more generic way and applicable to different cultures, **Roberts** (2014) explored whether the appeal of popular musical heritage from a perspective of local tourism and marketing can be attributed in part to the 'contagious magic' factor, analysing the links between cultural heritage, consumption and location, examining the extent to which the 'contagion' of musical cultural capital can influence the development of the local economy.

Thus, as far as city or country brands are concerned, it bears noting that, throughout history, many places have become the leading name in sound and music trends, styles or practices (**Faure-Carvallo**; **Gustems-Carnicer**, 2020). However, according to **Minsburg** (2016), such an identity must be analysed in terms of a socially shared subjective consciousness; the result of a sound memory projected into the future. According to **Arnheim** (2005), certain abstract elements, such as sound, acquire concrete symbolic meanings over time and in a given setting, by repeated application in the media. These sound symbols therefore acquire a great practical utility that combines aesthetic, cultural, functional and semantic aspects (**Chalkho**, 2014). This functionality may be translated into a brand that, gradually built up, can prove a valuable resource for positioning itself in the global market of cities and nations; to cite Borja and Castells: "big cities are the multinationals of the 21st century" (**Borja**; **Castells**, 1997, p. 190). It is no coincidence that having impactful brand value is now a major component of cities' marketing plans (**Anholt**, 2007; **Fernández**; **Paz**, 2005).

The research gathered here has provided information from a variety of perspectives, be it at the local, city or national level. Mainly, the phenomenon of music as relates to cities or countries, and its repercussion on audiences on a social, political and commercial level, have been studied. Results that bear highlighting include the effectiveness of musical rituals and traditions for the reinforcement of cultural identity, and the use of popular music as a lure and internationalising tool in the construction of a modern and attractive national brand. The use of audio branding as a governmental strategy to satisfy market needs and boost industry has also been confirmed.

7. Political branding

Although less profuse in the analysed literature, the political values assigned to sound in advertising settings should not be underestimated. We are all aware of the importance of national anthems in the formation of a country's identity, as well as the importance of the various instruments, songs and dance repertoires related to that identity. In the same way, some human groups or societies seek to identify and differentiate themselves through certain sounds that they feel are distinctive and closely linked to them.

In a study on electoral campaigns, **Mas**, **Collell** and **Xifra** (2017) aimed to analyse the potential of music in implementing a political branding strategy in the US presidential campaign. The results suggest that the Clinton and Trump campaigns used music strategically to communicate values in the emotional field. In particular, the music used by Trump associated branding and personality strategies based on the construction of a war hero who took action to save his homeland in times of crisis.

In terms of values and consumption patterns, **Yoganathan**, **Osburg** and **Akhtar** (2019) demonstrated in an online experiment with 308 participants that multi-sensory marketing was remarkably effective in encouraging sensible consumption (taking into account the natural and social settings and their inhabitants) by creating a context of experience-based customer discretion in both mass-market and niche commercial lines. This ability to imbue brands with understandable semantics, even at a global level, through multimodal models (combining, for example, image and sound) had been demonstrated previously in the research of **Hernández** (2013).

This potential of music in contexts of social and cultural identity can be translated into a political brand, as has been demonstrated in studies of audio branding applied to political branding strategies, in electoral campaigns, or ethical and moral strategies, in commercial campaigns for responsible consumption.

8. Conclusions

Thanks to the analysis carried out, it has been possible to establish the main centred emerging categories that organized the results obtained, which allows the main trends to be identified. Thus, for example, it can be seen how in the field of

"local city and country branding", popular music, rituals and artists participate in the construction of the external image of a brand, however, the country's censorship conditions some musical traditions and some artists.

Regarding the subject of "audiovisual advertising and branding", three aspects have been vital:

- the influence of sound landscapes in the creation of identity,
- the categorization of the brand, and
- the convergence between sound and the expected response of the consumer.

Concerning the "phonetics in brand names", the symbolism, the placement of consonants and vowels, as well as the updating and contextualization of language, have acted as catalysts that reflect the attributes of the different products and the perceptions that consumers have about them.

Finally, "political branding" has reflected both the use of sound branding in political campaigns and the construction of identity, as well as the establishment of different consumption models.

Figure 3 shows the main codes extracted and the relationship between them in the analysis carried out.

Once the bibliographic sample of the specific literature has been categorized according to *WoS* (2011-2020), the results obtained in the review show a considerable presence of antecedents in the study of audio branding in the impact literature of the last decade. From different parts of the world, numerous scientific communities have obtained relevant data about the importance of sound in the construction and architecture of brands.

Regarding the second specific objective, we can synthesise the following contributions in the field of study:

1. In the same way as corporate visual identity, the sound of brands and their products influences the consumer experience. That is why more and more is being invested in sound communication and the sound of the products, understanding that sound branding must be present at all moments of the user journey.

2. Although there are many contrary theories that reject that sound symbolism contains meaning per se, studies carried out in this area support the use of sound symbolism in the first syllables, as it helps consumers' perception.

3. Phonetics is an aspect to be taken into account in naming, some studies recommend the use of vowels in the first syllables, while others believe that certain letters are more in line with one type of product than another, as demonstrated in the market study of the perception of chocolate products in which consumers associated soft-sounding syllables with milk chocolate and hard-sounding syllables with plain chocolate. In this sense, some authors believe that the use of acute syllables may be related to a better perception of the brand from an ethical point of view.

4. Again, regarding phonetics, the length of the vowels must be taken into account. In light of this, studies show that brand reputation and the language in which the brand is pronounced and in which consumers pronounce it are relevant elements in terms of the perception generated by phonetics itself, as evidenced by the fact that Chinese brands translated into English make them better perceived by European and American consumers.

5. Although the study of sound branding can be taken from a holistic perspective, it is recommended to differentiate and consider the elements that make it up (sonotypes, brand voice, soundtracks, etc.). Some may not be part of sound branding, but part of brand communication or present in the consumer experience.

6. Sound branding is a relevant aspect for brand repositioning since it has been shown that a phonetic change or a change in any sound element of the brand also leads to a change in the brand's perception.

7. Concerning sound branding in constructing the personal brand of politicians and external communication of a country brand, music continues to be the most used element, above sonotypes. In respect of the personal brand of politicians, on many occasions, they use epic music to try to equate the figure of politicians to that of film heroes. While, as far as the country brand is concerned, it has been shown that it is essential to mix folk and popular music that denotes familiarity, pride of belonging and respect for traditions with current music,
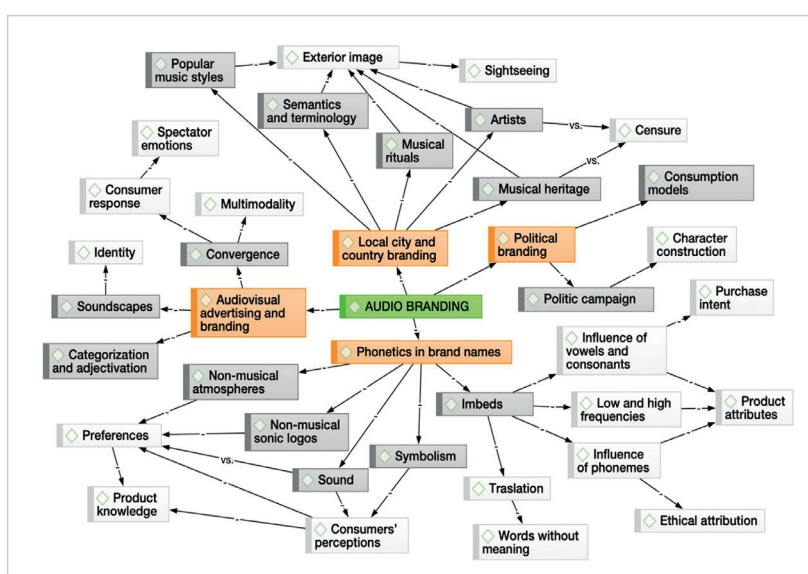

Figure 3. Relationship between the codes extracted in the analysis. Source: Produced with *Atlas.ti*

which contributes modernity and links with the new generations. In these two areas, the construction of sonotypes as part of sound branding is still in a very primitive phase.

8. Although the use of music in advertising goes back practically to the beginning of modern advertising on radio and later on television, whether with singles or soundtracks, in branding it is in the last two decades where its use has been professionalised. While before the evolution of sound branding or audio branding, brands were born silent, nowadays, it is strange that an international brand does not have sonotypes and sound identity. Many brands are now born with sound.

In addition to these eight points that summarise the main contributions, it is important to point out that the four areas in which the articles analysed have been located present very different interests and very heterogeneous dimensions, which suggests that the study of sound branding is still in an embryonic stage. Some of the new elements to take into account in future research regarding the use of phonetics in sound branding, audiovisual advertising and the brand, the local city or country brand and or the political brand are, to name the most relevant, the interaction of users / consumers in the co-creation of content, the incipient influence of neuroadvertising in branding and virtual technologies that are leading to the immersion of brands and their corporate in virtual worlds and metaverses.

'The use of audio branding as a governmental strategy to satisfy market needs and boost industry has also been confirmed'

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