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Dossier on Brand and Voice

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# Give the Brand a Voice

## Empiricism and Strategy

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**Because of the dominance of screens in our daily lives, attention and brand communication are all too often thought of in terms of a strong visual emphasis. However, auditory content is becoming more popular, and acoustic branding is becoming more important. In this paper, Dr. Matthias Rothensee and Leonie Pfeiffer of eye square contribute to the identification and empirical testing of brand voices.**

**Auditory information is used by people to absorb a wide range of information, so naturally, brands communicate with customers on multiple levels. Because our hearing can pick out the finest nuances in voices, voice, and sound play an important role in brand communication.**

## **The Importance of Brand Voices**

Consumers now spend a significant amount of time consuming purely auditory content, such as podcasts- this is naturally being picked up by the advertising industry. Podcast advertising revenues will nearly double in 2022 compared to 2019, and they are meeting a fan base that is fundamentally open to advertising. According to a survey conducted by OMR, more than half of audiences said they were open to advertising.

How can brands get their message across? Sound branding entails a variety of strategies, one of which is the strategic use of a brand voice. The voice is used in marketing activities to create a distinct brand identity or to best support it. The article presents an empirically obtained characterization of four types of brand voices, which can aid in the creation of a classification and its implementation in agency briefings.

## Strategy: Creating a Sonorous Brand Personality

Acoustic branding is a well-known strategy for developing and promoting a brand's identity. It contributes to a consistent brand identity by orchestrating all acoustic activities as typical brand markers, with the goal of strengthening brand recognition. There is no shortage of examples in the field of sound logos: Intel has been using its sound logo for over a quarter-century, and Deutsche Telekom joins the long list of brands with unmistakable audio logos. What about brand voices, though?

According to an amp analysis, the potential of so-called audio brands is far from exhausted due to a lack of comprehensive concepts that go beyond the use of a single acoustic brand element. In other words, clearly defined brand voices that are correctly positioned within the context of the brand are not a given. Furthermore, the world is changing brand identities shift, buyer structures shift, and brand positioning must adapt.

To ensure a consistent presence, a brand's voice should be consistent with its intended positioning and strategic direction of all marketing activities. A clear image must be conveyed that goes beyond a high recognition value to carry the brand image. In our understanding, the voice of a brand becomes relevant to consumers on three levels:

### System 0

**The perception level - it describes the (re)recognizability of the voice.**

### System 1

**The implicit-emotional level - how does the brand feel, and can it trigger an emotional response?**

### System 2

**How clear and understandable, how practically applicable is the voice judged?**

Voices differ from each other phenotypically in many dimensions: demographic characteristics of the speaker such as age, gender and accent are relevant. In addition, implicit-psychoacoustic characteristics attributed to a voice, such as dynamics or dominance, are important. If a brand wants to find a voice that harmonizes with the brand image, it is a good idea to choose an empirical test after an initial screening of potential speakers, which provides data-based support for the gut feeling of fit with the brand.

# Empiricism

## Implicitly Locating Brand Voices in Gut Feelings

eye square conducts studies in which brand voices are echoed on a regular basis. Typically, these online surveys are used to screen test people who fit the brand's target demographic. They are shown advertising- and industry-specific voice content in short, representative audio excerpts, allowing us to compare 3-5 "candidates." The finalists that are recommended for use are then identified using a multidimensional measurement approach. Implicit, reaction time-based methods are also used, which prove to be particularly sensitive because the implicit system contains a large portion of the associations with voices. Voice color, volume, clarity/pronunciation, speed, and person characteristics are used as attributes.

Based on these findings, we created a Brand Voice Model to assist our clients in classifying how their voice can be described. This classification can be used to brief voice casting agencies and facilitate the precise description of a desired characteristic. The Brand Voice Model is also used in the research process to situate voice in multidimensional space.

The Brand Voice Model is composed of the following four voice types that were discovered through empirical factor analysis of implicit associations in various data sets from our Brand Voice studies. These four types are briefly introduced below:

**The friendly type:** This voice type conveys a particularly polite and pleasant impression. It is distinguished by a high level of warmth and spontaneous trust, which is founded on a strong sense of authenticity. Being know-it-all or annoying in communication does not suit the friendly type at all.

**The dynamic type:** This type is described as particularly dynamic vocally. The voices can be listened to for an extended period of time without becoming monotonous due to the interplay of different pitches and speech tempos. They have a high level of recognition.

**The informing type:** The informing voices make up another voice group. They are very clear, which could be attributed to precise pronunciation and a medium speaking tempo. Informing voices are said to be highly competent.

**The buddy type:** These voices use local dialects and simple language to create a buddy-like impression. The buddy type is described as particularly close, as if talking to someone in person. These voices are frequently given the label "sporty."

The model defines four distinct voice types that comprise a brand's personality. Each voice is composed of elements from the four voice types, and they are rarely encountered in their pure form in actuality.



The four voice types of the eye square Brand Voice Model (Graphic: eye square)

## Application of the eye square Brand Voice Model

Brands can use this simple model to think about brand strategy in the briefing phase. For example, it can be used to work out in workshops with stakeholders, "Where should our brand be?"

Furthermore, the brand's positioning can be derived from the respective marketing department's brand book in order to determine whether the brand and its voice match or not in an empirical review. The following example depicts the positioning of two voice profiles in the brand voice model. Focusing on this, a choice between voice A and voice B can be made.



**Voice A (left) is a friendly type, Voice B (right) informative and buddy-like. The brand can choose one of the profiles, depending on the positioning. (Graphic: eye square)**

Voice A (left) is a friendly type, voice B (right) informative and chummy. The brand can choose one of the profiles, depending on the positioning. (Image: eye square)

For example, a brand aimed at younger consumers may purposefully use a sporty buddy voice. However, there is a risk that the brand will appear too close to people or will be labeled as silly as a result of this. Even if all of the voice types have positive qualities, each of them can be a bad fit for a brand. If the voice is perceived to be inconsistent with the brand, the impression of a staged, inauthentic communication can quickly emerge.

However, consistency cannot be the sole motivator for selecting the right brand voice. The second magical word is potential. Giving your brand a voice that, at first glance, does not match your current positioning can make perfect sense. The drift effects triggered by the brand voice can then be exploited. A younger voice, for example, has the potential to revitalize a brand's impact if this is intended.

Experience has shown that defining these criteria successfully makes the selection of voices easier. The findings of an empirical review aid in drawing the correct conclusions for one's own brand. Nothing stands in the way of developing a sonorous brand aesthetic once this homework has been completed and the voice is both media-compatible and sufficiently available for all marketing activities.

## Dr. Matthias Rothensee

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Dr. Matthias Rothensee is responsible for method and innovation development at eye square. His research focuses on the implicit effects of marketing, emotions and visual perception. He is an expert in multivariate statistics and develops eye square's media benchmarks. Matthias also has expert knowledge in digital marketing, advertising effectiveness research and implicit methods.

**Read more:** <https://www.eye-square.com/en/dr-matthias-rothensee/>

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Leonie Pfeiffer works as a Research Consultant in eye square's Brand and Media Experience team. She completed her Bachelor's degree in media management and her Master's degree in media and communication research at the Institute for Journalism and Communication Research in Hannover. Prior to eye square, she worked in the Mobile Corona Analytics Response Project, where she accompanied several longitudinal studies on attitudes, experiences, and evaluations of the information situation from the perspective of SARS-CoV-2-tested individuals, among others.