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Sound design in public environments

Directional audio proven to be highly effective in improving sales in retail

Two researches lead by Lexter Technology & Sound have shown positive results of in-store audio marketing with directional audio, showing strong increase in sales

Result from research 1

- 86.7% increase in consumers willing to try a new dairy product
- 15 seconds longer stay in advertisement spot
- 9.5% sales growth just in one week

Result from research 2

- 60% Sales growth
- 25% increase in brand evaluation
- 22% increase in product evaluation
- 20% increase in product category evaluation

Research 1: An experimental study of non-musical sound in a grocery store

Axel af Petersens and Per Lundberg, Department of Advertising and Public Relations, Stockholm University Stockholm 2012

The authors sought to examine whether non-musical sounds in a grocery store could change consumer attitudes to organic dairy products and the environment in which they are sold, and if using the sound could lead shoppers to choose organic products over non-organic products. In collaboration with Lexter Technology & Sound the sound of mooing cows, clucking hens and chirping birds were played. Female voice narration also told six different benefits of organic products. The sound was played through a special technology of directional audio for one week in the dairy section of a supermarket in the Northern part of Stockholm.

3 methods for data collection:

- Survey -

250 respondents collectively for Control and Experimental group

- Observation -

Authors observed 200 randomly selected shoppers who had been in the dairy department (100 from each group) to investigate how the sound influenced the time shoppers spent in the dairy department

- Sales statistics -

Store assisted with data for four different dairy products. The selection of products was made in consultation with the store and selected products were; red milk, green milk, buttermilk and yogurt.

Results:

- 53.6% shoppers recognized audio
- Significantly improved consumer attitude toward organic products
- 86.7% increase in the number of people who purchased a new organic dairy product, which they were not previously aware of

The shoppers exposed to the directional audio stayed 15 seconds longer in the dairy department compared with those in the control group, 40.48 seconds versus 55.37 seconds

Clear sales increase in campaigned organic products, leading to the sales increase of 9.5% for organic products when the directional audio was played

Conclusion:

More than half of the respondents recognized the directional audio, which led to a very positive result. Shoppers were unconsciously influenced by directional audio as they recognized the audio.

Authors believe that non-musical sound can clearly contribute to an improved attitude towards organic products. The audio can also lead shoppers to think and act differently than normal buying habits and thus increase the sales of new, organic products.

Research 2: Hearing is believing

Tomas Ellefsson and Johan Pfeiler, Retail Academics
Stockholm in June 2012

Several studies have been made with sound and music in the store but have often tried to create a feeling or to have an effect on entire category, often with good results. Very few studies with sound, however, have been designed to sell a specific product. It has been known that a special campaign would contribute to an increase in sales as more consumers are exposed to the product and thus given the chance to buy the product. Special campaigns are often combined with price offers to create a multiple effect, where exposure leads consumers to pay attention to the product and the price will be a buying lead. Constant price offers, however, weakens sales margins. How about using directional audio instead of price as a buying lead?

Purpose:

- Investigating the impact of directional audio on selected products
- Examining influence differences depending on store size
- Examining result differences depending on a suitability of audio content of a campaigned product, in order to ensure that it is not the audio itself but audio content that has an effect

Methods:

- Sales data collection every day for 7 weeks in 3 ICA stores
- Two well-known beverage products selected for a special campaign
- Latin Square Design and Triangulation statistical methods
- 1200 consumer observations and 322 consumer surveys

Results:

- 60% sales growth for campaigned beverage products
- 25% increase in brand evaluation for the campaigned brand
- 22% increase in product evaluation of the campaigned product
- 20% increase in category evaluation of the campaigned product

Conclusion:

Directional audio has tremendous potential, but must be used correctly, as both the audio content and size of store need to be planned accordingly. Authors found that the sound worked the best in a large-sized store, as in large stores shoppers seem to be more influenced and are more likely to engage in impulse purchases. Authors also found that the audio content must fit the campaigned product as no positive results were seen in mismatched content.

Panphonics is the world's leading provider of directional audio speakers. Founded in 1997 and headquartered in Finland, Panphonics delivers targeted audio solutions for acoustically demanding applications. Panphonics Sound Shower® directional audio speakers can be found in banks, retail stores, digital signage projects, museums, information kiosks, service stations, theaters, and offices throughout the world.

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March, 2013