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**Topic: A quantitative and qualitative study on the effect of on-hold-messages**

**Motivation**

Companies and brands get oneself with an identity to dissociate from competitors in saturates markets. This is an interdisciplinary field of interest in marketing, psychology, sociology, composition, and in its combination - systematic musicology. Through this pure acoustical channel a customer is entering the premisses throughout the ears. They are processing all available informations to produce an pleasant or unpleasant feeling.

**Problem statement**

This study is analysing the impact of music, speech and gender while listening to on hold messages. The qualitative part based on the work from Zander<sup>1</sup> and Kapp. The qualitative part is elevating positive and negative elements from on hold messages to get a deeper view of the field.

**Approach**

80 experimental subjects took part on the online survey. To simulate a realistic scenario, subjects were requested to call a landline telephone number and listen to the on hold message. In this process they were associated to one of six groups (see fig. 1)

| group 1                     | 2                           | 3                            | 4                                | 5                                | 6                                 |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| - music 1<br>- male speaker | - music 2<br>- male speaker | - no music<br>- male speaker | - music 1<br>- female<br>speaker | - music 2<br>- female<br>speaker | - no music<br>- female<br>speaker |

fig. 1: attributes of the group stimules in the 2\*3 multifactorial design

Thereupon they answered 58 quantitative questions refer to the perception of the speaker (*Giessen-Test<sup>2</sup>*) and the fictive brand. The bipolar Items are to rated on a scale from -3 to 3. Two open questions did complete the questionnaire.

1 Zander, Mark F. (2006): Musical influence in advertising: how music modifies first impressions of product endorsers and brands. In: *Psychology of Music*, 34 (4), p. 465-480.

Zander, Mark F./ Kapp, Markus (2007): Verwendung und Wirkung von Musik in der Werbung. Schwarze Zahlen durch "blaue Noten"?, In: Hans-Bredow-Institut (Hrsg.): Medien und Kommunikationswissenschaft. Sonderband 1 : *Musik und Medien*. Baden-Baden, S. 92-104.

2 Beckmann, Dieter/ Brähler, Elmar/ Richter, Horst-Eberhard (1990): *Der Gießen-Test (GT)*. Ein Test für Individual- und Gruppendiagnostik. Handbuch. Vierte, Überarbeitete Auflage mit Neustandardisierung 1990, Bern, Stuttgart, Toronto.

## **Results**

Half of the subjects couldn't answer the question about folksiness of the speaker and its ability to handling money (neutral decision). Especially good for a personal decision was the rating of appeal and acting talent of the speaker. On questions for Brand values subjects could answer at best Items for calm/choppiness and reserve/emphasis of the brand impact. The brand impact can be influenced with the on hold message and music can modulate the impact of the speaking person. The influence from musical parameters on the Items couldn't able to differentiate because of the small sample size.

The answers of the qualitative question could be ranged in 10 categories. The most frequent one is describing loss of time and doubtfulness of the waiting time. 23 persons appreciated the security to get connection and using the time to prepare the dialogue. As many as before criticised that they have to pay the waiting time and partially assume „rip-off“.

## **Conclusions**

There is a modulating effect of music in on hold environments on the perception of a speaking person and the perception of brands. But the speech and the gender of the speaking person are more dominant. For the time being the optimization of the structure and progress in on hold messages is more pregnant the the used background music.