Effect of Music on Branding Effectiveness : An Experimental Study of Telecom Brands

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Abstract

Music, as a powerful sensory stimulus, is effectively used by marketers for a variety of purposes ranging from advertising, events, websites, and products to retailing. In the recent past, its use as a brand communication element has gained greater momentum due to information overload. Studies have examined the impact of music on consumer perceptions, attitudes, emotions, engagement, and other behavioural responses. Experimental studies have studied the effect of music in the retailing and advertising context. The present research is an experimental study to investigate the effect of music on branding effectiveness for six telecom brands in India. The results show a significant positive effect (of music) on telecom brands. The study also suggests that music has a differential effect on brands, which differs with regard to brand effectiveness on measurement parameters. The study contributes to the literature on music and branding, and proposes implications for research and practice.

Keywords: **music, signature tunes, sonic branding, branding effectiveness**

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Music is used as background music, foreground music, jingle, or signature tunes in a variety of marketing applications. It influences emotional states, thought processes, and behavioural responses of customers (Bruner, 1990; Garlin & Owen, 2006; Oakes & North, 2008). It has been extensively studied in marketing literature as an important atmospheric variable in the retail stores and service settings, and as a key element in audio visual advertisements. Music, due to its power of emotional arousal, contributes to branding activities and customer experiences.

Sonic branding or use of music in branding has gained greater significance in the recent past. As visuals, graphics, and text are creating advertising clutter and information overload, music is extensively used as a powerful brand communication element by all types of brands across all categories. Marketers are creating unique musical compositions for brand positioning. Innovations are done with sound effects to augment overall branding effectiveness. Music influences consumers at different levels with varying intensities. A good or liked music evokes positive responses, whereas, bad or disliked music has an adverse impact on the brand. Studies have reported that different compositions of music produce variation in terms of their responses (Kellaris & Kent, 1992; Morin, Dube, & Chebat, 2007; Soars, 2009).

Objectives of the Study

The role of music in marketing parlance has been examined in a large number of reported studies. Most of the previous work has been done in the context of advertising, retailing, service settings, and consumer responses. Music and branding is a relatively less explored area. In the light of earlier work done in this area and the existing research gap, the present experimental study was carried out to investigate the effect of music (signature tunes) on branding effectiveness for six telecom brands (Idea, BSNL, Docomo, Reliance, Vodafone, and Airtel) in India.

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The organization of rest of the paper is as follows: After introducing the research problem, a conceptual framework, based on a brief review of literature, is presented. It is followed by methodology giving a detailed description of the experimental design and procedure. The results are presented and discussed in the following section. The last section deals with the conclusion of the study, including limitations and implications for researchers and professionals.

Review of Literature

Marketing Applications of Music : Marketers engage customers' senses using sight, sound, taste, smell, and touch-related cues to influence their mind and behaviour (Soars, 2009). Its influence is observed at both cognitive as well as at emotional levels (Bennet, A., & Bennet, D. 2008). Music is found to be one of the most effective tools to evoke desired responses. Most of the early research work in the field of music was done in the domain of advertising and retailing. These have examined the relationship between music and consumer responses using theoretical frameworks and field investigations.

Music and Advertising : Advertising has extensively used music as jingles, signature tunes, background music, or other formats of sound effects. Gorn (1982) carried out one of the most cited experimental studies using a classical conditioning approach on effect of music in advertising on choice behaviour and reported that hearing liked or disliked music while being exposed to a product can directly affect product preferences. In one of the early works on music in advertising, Huron (1989) argued that music can contribute to effectiveness of a broadcast advertisement in six ways - **(a)** entertainment, **(b)** structure/continuity, **(c)** memorability, **(d)** lyrical language, **(e)** targeting, and **(f)** authority establishment. Kellaris and Cox (1989) and Kellaris, Cox, A. D., & Cox, D. (1993) observed the effect of music on advertising processing.

In a study on advertising tracking experiment, Stewart, Farmer, and Stannard (1990) examined the effects on music on product recall on three thousand people over a nine-month period. It was revealed that 62% of the people remembered the commercial after the verbal cue; whereas, 83% of people recognized the music. In another study, Stewart and Punj (1998) found that nearly all the respondents recognized the musical cue. MacInnis and Park (1991) observed that emotional memories created by music generate positive feelings and attitudes when the memories are congruent with the advertisement's message. Music in advertising can significantly influence the perception of the brand endorser, emotional reactions, and memories evoked by means of specific music pieces (Apaolaza-Ibáñez, Zander, & Hartmann, 2010).

Music and Retailing / Service Settings : In retailing and service settings, music is commonly used as a servicescape element to entertain, engage, and influence consumer behaviour. It is used to produce desired attitudes and behaviours among customers, to improve store image, and stimulate customer purchasing (Milliman, 1982). A large number of research studies have established that music brings positive returns to marketing efforts in terms of sales, purchase intentions, satisfaction, duration of stay, perceived waiting time, and store image (Alpert & Alpert, 1990; Areni & Kim, 1993; Broekemier, Marquardt, & Gentry, 2008 ; Herrington, 1996 ; Herrington & Capella, 1994 ; Milliman,1986; Oakes & North, 2008 ; Soars, 2009 ; Yalch & Spangenberg, 2000).

In a pioneering work, Oakes (2000) proposed musicscape as a visual framework, similar to Bitner's (1992) model of servicescape to describe a visual overview of possible variables which could interact when background music is used with a service setting. It was further proposed in the same study that by combining and altering the permutation of individual musical variables, a synergistic interaction can be created. Areni (2003) found that atmospheric music creates the right image, makes customers stay longer, draws them in or drives them off, manages perception of time, encourages or discourages antisocial behaviour, and blocks out annoying and intrusive background music. Based on a comprehensive review of earlier work, it was reported that music influences consumption experience at cognitive, emotional, and behavioural levels, specifically with regard to attitudes and perceptions, time and money spent, and mood and feelings in retail experiences (Jain & Bagdare, 2011).

↳ **Music and Branding Effectiveness :** A brand is created using a wide range of elements such as name, term, logo, symbol, character, design, music, spokesperson, packaging, signage, and so forth. These elements combine to give a unique identity, meaning, and image to a specific brand. The branding effectiveness is often measured in terms of awareness, recall, association, interest, involvement, liking, preference, attitude, perceived quality, purchase intentions, and loyalty (Aaker, 1996 ; Keller, 1993).

Gorn, Goldberg, Chattopadhyay, and Litvack (1991) conducted a study examining the effects of music versus information on recall, choice, and attitudes. Music embedded brands are easily identified, associated, and remembered by the target customers. In the commercial context, music has always been an integral part of promotion and ambience. It has been widely used in branding to create 'audio logo' or 'sonic branding,' an aural identity by using unique signature tunes, and programmed background or foreground music to create an audio environment around the brand (Fulberg, 2003 ; McCusker, 1997). The auditory clues allow brands to engage the customers by surrounding them through audio environment in an invisible manner (Fulberg, 2003). Effective sonic branding strongly influences purchase intentions through cognitive and emotional responses of the customers.

Brodsky (2010) carried out a study to develop a functional method for applying music in branding. In this study, he developed a strategy for applying music by employing design language as a template for composition. It was revealed that consumers could decode composers' intentions to express brand characteristics and product features, and were able to designate design language-generated music to the appropriate brand. Favourable responses in terms of awareness, identification, remembrance, involvement, differentiation, association, likelihood to purchase, and so forth had been reported (Bagdare & Tiwari, 2011).

The role of music in marketing activities and influence on consumers has created a widespread interest among researchers. As marketing is becoming more sensory, music will continue to play a greater role in shaping consumer experiences. Studies in the domain of advertising, retailing, and service settings provide the framework to further explore the relationship of music with other marketing outcomes. Therefore, the purpose of the present study is to investigate the effect of music (signature tunes) on branding effectiveness.

Context for the Research

Telecom is a highly competitive industry dominated by multinational and national players, specifically in the mobile phone services (cellular services) segment. Music is a powerful branding tool available to the telecom marketers, which can be used as signature tunes, ring tones, jingles, or background music in radio or television advertisements. Musical composition has a differential impact on listeners – some musical pieces are liked, preferred, and remembered over other musical pieces. Telecom operators create "signature tunes" - a unique musical composition for creating their brand identity, image, and differentiate it from other competitors. It has a significant impact on overall branding effectiveness of telecom operators. The present study has examined the effect of music (signature tunes) on branding effectiveness of telecom brands.

Methodology

↳ **Experimental Research Design :** An experimental study with "After Only" design was conducted to measure the effect of music (signature tunes) on branding effectiveness. Other advertisement elements such as name, logo, visuals, colours, characters, design, themes, and so forth were controlled by playing only the "signature tunes" of the selected telecom brands.

	Under Graduate Students	Post Graduate Students
Male Students	40	40
Female Students	40	40

↳ **Subjects :** The study was conducted on management students of under graduate and post graduate programmes

of a management Institute in a State university in Central India. A total of 160 students between the age group 18 to 24 years participated in the study. Convenience sampling was used for selection of the respondents. All the students who volunteered for the study were assigned to four groups as per the following distribution:

↳ **Independent Variable (Treatment Variable) :** The independent variable was "signature tunes" format of "music". Signature tunes are unique musical compositions consisting of sound, pitch, tempo, notes, melody, harmony, and rhythm for each brand, which gives it an audio identity, image, and differentiates it from other brands' music. For the present study "signature tunes," which are also used as ringtones by six mobile phone service providers (cellular service providers) namely Airtel, Idea, Vodafone, BSNL, Reliance, and Docomo were used in India. These signature tunes are also used in radio and television commercials of these telecom brands. The music of all the six brands was played individually for all the four groups. After listening to the six different "signature tunes," the subjects were asked to fill a questionnaire to give their responses.

↳ **Dependent Variable :** Branding effectiveness was used as a dependent variable for the present study. It referred to customers' evaluation of brand performance in terms of awareness, recall, association, interest, involvement, liking, preference, and so forth. All the items were primarily drawn from brand management models of Aaker and Keller.

↳ **Measurement Instrument :** A questionnaire was developed after a review of brand management models and related literature on branding. The responses were obtained on a self-administered questionnaire containing ten statements. Each subject was asked to give responses on rank order from 1 to 6 for each statement, after listening to all six pieces of music for all the six brands.

↳ **Experiment Procedure :** All the 40 subjects of a specific group were asked sit in a multimedia class room. They were distributed a self-administered questionnaire. The signature tunes of all the six brands selected for the present study were played in a sequence. After playing all the signature tunes of the six brands, the subjects were asked to write their responses on the questionnaire for all the six brands. On completion of the experiment with the first group, other groups were taken to the experiment room respectively. A similar procedure was adopted for the remaining three groups for obtaining their responses. The data was collected over a spread of two days in the month of March 2012.

Results and Discussion

Consumer responses on ten parameters for measuring branding effectiveness were analysed for six telecom brands. The analysis was performed at three levels: First, the overall mean scoring of all the branding elements was taken together; the second analysis aimed to find out the influence of gender and type of course on branding effectiveness, and the third analysis refers to criteria wise performance of all the six brands.

Composite mean score on branding effectiveness (Table 1) reveals that telecom brand Idea scored the highest

Table 1. Branding Effectiveness Mean Score

Brands	*N*	Mean	Std. Deviation
Idea (I)	160	40.9375	10.86086
Airtel (A)	160	38.9375	10.46689
Vodafone (V)	160	35.2750	10.41827
Docomo (D)	160	32.6312	8.70597
Reliance (R)	160	31.7688	10.97294
BSNL (B)	160	30.5312	11.34752
Valid *N* (listwise)	160		

followed by Airtel and Vodafone; whereas, Docomo, Reliance, and BSNL were perceived relatively less effective by the respondents. The scores reflect that music (signature tunes) used by Idea, Airtel, and Vodafone has a greater impact on the audience as compared to the other brands.

The branding effectiveness scores were further compared across gender and courses to study their influence. Mean scores (Tables 2 and 3) reveal that there are marginal differences in the scores. When tested using *t*-test, it was

Table 2. Gender - Branding Effectiveness Mean Score

	Gender	*N*	Mean	Std. Deviation
Idea	Male	80	39.1000	9.81809
	Female	80	42.7750	11.58346
BSNL	Male	80	29.7625	10.82688
	Female	80	31.3000	11.86357
Docomo	Male	80	32.1375	8.62986
	Female	80	33.1250	8.80790
Reliance	Male	80	32.5625	10.90099
	Female	80	30.9750	11.05564
Vodafone	Male	80	36.1250	10.52468
	Female	80	34.4250	10.30641
Airtel	Male	80	40.1875	9.17908
	Female	80	37.6875	11.53596

Table 3. Courses - Branding Effectiveness Mean Score

	Course	*N*	Mean	Std. Deviation
Idea	UG	80	40.5750	10.99226
	PG	80	41.3000	10.78489
BSNL	UG	80	30.4000	10.40399
	PG	80	30.6625	12.28351
Docomo	UG	80	34.0125	8.56767
	PG	80	31.2500	8.67632
Reliance	UG	80	30.9125	10.41201
	PG	80	32.6250	11.50825
Vodafone	UG	80	35.1250	11.15753
	PG	80	35.4250	9.69115
Airtel	UG	80	39.0750	10.69931
	PG	80	38.8000	10.29489

Table 4. Branding Effectiveness Mean Score

Brands	Overall Score	Awareness	Interest	Involvement	Association	Recall	Friendly	Motivating	Engaging	Preference	Liking
I	**40.9375**	**4.3750**	4.0563	**4.0625**	**4.0625**	3.8625	**4.3250**	**4.2500**	**3.9063**	3.7813	**4.2563**
B	30.5312	3.3063	2.8438	2.9000	3.0500	3.2563	3.0438	3.0625	3.0563	3.0188	2.9938
D	32.6312	3.2688	3.4500	3.2313	3.0063	3.3938	3.4875	3.0375	3.2250	3.2938	3.2375
R	31.7688	3.0563	3.0125	3.5563	3.2375	2.9125	2.9688	3.0938	3.5875	3.3875	2.9563
V	35.2750	3.2375	3.5813	3.3625	3.6750	3.6563	3.4250	3.5438	3.5688	3.4875	3.7375
A	38.9375	3.7313	**4.0813**	3.8875	3.9188	**3.9875**	3.8563	4.0188	3.6375	**3.9875**	3.8313

found that for both gender and courses, the "*t* " value was not found to be significant, suggesting that there is no effect of gender and courses on branding effectiveness. This shows that male and female students at both undergraduate and post graduate levels responded similarly to the music (signature tunes) used by the six telecom brands. It can be said that due to the control of the age group - as all the respondents fell within the age group of 18-24 years - the young male and female respondents responded similarly, irrespective of their gender and level of courses (UG and PG courses).

Criteria wise analysis of branding effectiveness scores (Table 4) threw up more interesting results. Both Idea and Airtel were very close in terms of all the ten components constituting branding effectiveness. Brand Idea scored highest on awareness, involvement, association, friendly, motivating, engaging and liking criteria; whereas, Brand Airtel scored the highest with respect to interest, recall, and preference. Although the differences are not highly significant, yet Brand Idea scores over Brand Airtel, reflecting its popularity among the respondents. These findings are in line with earlier studies reporting the effect of music on consumer perceptions, attitude formation, attention, identification, association, recall, purchase intentions, and so forth (Bagdare & Tiwari, 2011 ; Bordsky, 2010 ; Fulberg, 2003 ; McCusker, 1997).

Chi square analysis was further performed to check the significance of differences in terms of the responses of the respondents on ten parameters for six brands. On all the ten criteria, most of the brands did not show any significant differences (refer to Annexure - 1). Impact of music (signature tunes) on branding effectiveness can be attributed to the fact that most of such music pieces are composed by famous Bollywood music composers such as A. R. Rehman for Airtel, Ilayaraja for Idea, Sameer Uddin for Reliance, and Ram Sampat for Docomo. These music composers are experienced in creating melodious music, which touches the hearts of millions of Indians. Getting their signature tunes composed by famous film music composers increases the possibility of liking and popularity of the brands' signature tunes by the Indian audience. Melodious music gives a meaning to the brand ; hence, it is able to connect with the target audience and enhances its effectiveness on various parameters.

Conclusion and the Way Forward

Music has emerged as an integral part of brand communication along with name, visual, colours, and characters. It is a powerful stimulus for arousing emotions and establishing a connect with consumers in an entertaining way. Marketers have realized its potential in marketing applications, specifically in brand building activities. This study contributes to the present knowledge about the role of music in branding and provides insights about its use as a brand communication element. The present experimental study has found a significant impact of music (signature tunes) on branding effectiveness, measured on different parameters suggested in branding theories. Idea and Airtel emerged as two brands with most popular signature tunes composed by famous Bollywood music composers.

The present study has a number of limitations. The study was conducted with students in an urban area representing the central part of the country. Music may be influenced by cultural, social, demographic, or geographical factors. Branding effectiveness may vary with different combination of musical elements or other branding elements. Application of music in other service or manufacturing brands provides more opportunities for exploration. Future researchers may also use other types of research designs involving before /after studies with or without control groups. There is enough scope for extending the present work as well as exploring new research issues in the domain of music and marketing.

Managerial Implications

The study provides valuable insights for practitioners. Music has emerged as an integral element for effective brand communication. It suggests that creating effective music in congruence with brand values will help in enhancing branding effectiveness in terms of awareness, interest, association, involvement, recall, and other positive consumer responses. In order to design music based brands, the makers need to analyze musical preferences of the target audience and employ professional music composers who can create a unique musical piece for brand positioning, which can be used as a signature tune, theme music, background music, or even as a jingle.

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Annexure 1. Chi-Square Test

Test Statistics - Criteria 1 - Awareness

	Idea	BSNL	Docomo	Reliance	Vodafone	Airtel
Chi-square	90.650[a]	16.925[a]	29.825[a]	21.575[a]	16.850[a]	15.275[a]
Df	5	5	5	5	5	5
Asymp. Sig.	.000	.005	.000	.001	.005	.009

[a].0 cells (.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 26.7.

Test Statistics - Criteria 2 - Interest

	Idea	BSNL	Docomo	Reliance	Vodafone	Airtel
Chi-square	20.900[a]	33.950[a]	26.300[a]	13.325[a]	9.425[a]	33.575[a]
Df	5	5	5	5	5	5
Asymp. Sig.	.001	.000	.000	.021	**.093**	.000

[a]. 0 cells (.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 26.7.

Test Statistics - Criteria 3 - Involvement

	Idea	BSNL	Docomo	Reliance	Vodafone	Airtel
Chi-square	24.275[a]	25.100[a]	12.950[a]	4.850[a]	10.925[a]	15.950[a]
Df	5	5	5	5	5	5
Asymp. Sig.	.000	.000	.024	**.434**	**.053**	.007

[a]. 0 cells (.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 26.7.

Test Statistics - Criteria 4 - Association

	Idea	BSNL	Docomo	Reliance	Vodafone	Airtel
Chi-square	23.675[a]	17.600[a]	18.950[a]	7.400[a]	9.725[a]	21.575[a]
Df	5	5	5	5	5	5
Asymp. Sig.	.000	.003	.002	**.193**	**.083**	.001

[a]. 0 cells (.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 26.7.

Test Statistics - Criteria 5 - Recall

	Idea	BSNL	Docomo	Reliance	Vodafone	Airtel
Chi-square	16.700[a]	14.150[a]	18.500[a]	31.250[a]	12.725[a]	23.375[a]
Df	5	5	5	5	5	5
Asymp. Sig.	.005	.015	.002	.000	.026	.000

[a]. 0 cells (.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 26.7.

Test Statistics - Criteria 6 - Friendly

	Idea	BSNL	Docomo	Reliance	Vodafone	Airtel
Chi-square	50.600[a]	21.725[a]	7.325[a]	18.875[a]	3.800[a]	19.700[a]
Df	5	5	5	5	5	5
Asymp. Sig.	.000	.001	**.198**	.002	**.579**	.001

[a]. 0 cells (.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 26.7.

Test Statistics - Criteria 7 - Motivating

	Idea	BSNL	Docomo	Reliance	Vodafone	Airtel
Chi-square	49.100[a]	13.550[a]	39.950[a]	9.425[a]	5.675[a]	22.775[a]
Df	5	5	5	5	5	5
Asymp. Sig.	.000	.019	.000	.093	**.339**	.000

[a]. 0 cells (.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 26.7.

Test Statistics - Criteria 8 - Engaging

	Idea	BSNL	Docomo	Reliance	Vodafone	Airtel
Chi-square	10.475[a]	23.000[a]	11.675[a]	3.875[a]	6.800[a]	6.500[a]
Df	5	5	5	5	5	5
Asymp. Sig.	.063	.000	.040	**.568**	**.236**	**.261**

[a]. 0 cells (.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 26.7.

Test Statistics - Criteria 9 - Preference

	Idea	BSNL	Docomo	Reliance	Vodafone	Airtel
Chi-square	23.375[a]	35.375[a]	27.500[a]	7.625[a]	27.125[a]	21.950[a]
Df	5	5	5	5	5	5
Asymp. Sig.	.000	.000	.000	**.178**	.000	.001

[a]. 0 cells (.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 26.7.

INDIAN JOURNAL OF MARKETING

Statement about ownership and other particulars about the newspaper "INDIAN JOURNAL OF MARKETING" to be published in the 3rd issue every year after the last day of February.

FORM 1V
(see Rule 18)

1.	**Place of Publication**	**:**	**NEW DELHI**
2.	**Periodicity of Publication**	**:**	**MONTHLY**
3.	**4,5 Printer, Publisher and Editor's Name**	**:**	**S. GILANI**
4.	**Nationality**	**:**	**INDIAN**
5.	**Address**	**:**	**Y-21,HAUZ KHAS, NEW DELHI-16**
6.	**Newspaper and Address of individual**	**:**	**ASSOCIATED MANAGEMENT**
	who owns the newspaper and partner	**:**	**CONSULTANTS PRIVATE LIMITED**
	of shareholder holding more than one percent.	**:**	**Y-21, HAUZ KHAS, NEW DELHI-16**

I, S. Gilani, hereby declare that the particulars given above are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Dated : March 1 , 2014

Sd/-
S. Gilani
Signature of Publisher