

Outback Steakhouse

Study goals:

- 1) To better understand the role audio plays in successful television commercials that have had sufficient time and budget to generate high levels of awareness
- 2) To quantify audio and visual's role in triggering brand identification in these commercials

Methodology: Television commercials from top U.S. advertisers were de-branded with all audio and visual "brand" mentions stripped out. Online interviews were conducted with 300 consumers (A21-54). Two groups of 150 respondents were served 14 clips comprised of a mix of the de-branded television commercials and audio-only versions of the commercials.

One of the tested ads was for:

Brand	Television Ad	Length (secs)
Outback Steakhouse	\$12.99	:20

Fieldwork for this commercial was conducted December 10-13, 2012.

First question: After exposure to the de-branded TV commercial clip or audio of that clip, respondents were asked "Name the company or brand you think the clip was for?"

	Video Exposure			Audio Exposure		
	Adults	Men	Women	Adults	Men	Women
Outback Steakhouse	93%	96%	90%	92%	93%	90%

Outback Steakhouse had nearly universal recognition for both the audio-only and the TV clip. Men and women were able to correctly attribute this clip to Outback after being exposed to the de-branded clip of the actual television commercial.

Video exposure: Brand Triggers

Question #2: At what point did you realize what the brand was? What visual or audio clue led you to recognize the brand? Was there an “aha” moment?

83% of the respondents who correctly attributed the ad to Outback Steakhouse said they knew it when they heard the narrator’s voice:

The music and the actors voice .
the voiceover's accent
The voice over accent .
Australian voice
Sound of the voice
The Australian accent
As soon as I heard the Australian accent .
I recognize the man's Australian voice in the commercial.
the guys accent & the food looked amazing but mainly with his accent
Seeing the steak and the Australian accent of the voiceover

24% of the respondents who correctly attributed the ad to Outback Steakhouse said they knew it from visuals / steak:

the plane flying by the beach
When I saw the grill
When he said 'down under' and then seeing the food confirmed it.
When I heard the Australian accent I suspected it was probably for Outback. The aha! moment was when I saw the steak .
First, I thought I knew when I heard the Aussie accent. When I saw the steak , I knew for sure.
When the Aussie guy spoke and they showed food on a grill
As soon as I heard the Australian narrator and saw the first picture of steak
Seeing the steak and the fact that the narrator was Australian
I heard the Australian accent and saw the steak and knew it was for Outback Steakhouse.
Key words = down under; Australian accent; font on price tag...

Question #3: Respondents to the video clip were asked: How did the video make you feel? Did it trigger any emotion?

47% of the respondents who correctly attributed the ad to Outback Steakhouse said they were hungry:

It made me hungry

I do love an Outback steak... made me want one.
Hungry! :)
hungry for a steak and potatoes
The food looked good. Wouldn't mind trying it.
Made me hungry. Want to eat bbq.
I wanted a juicy steak.
Thought about their blooming onion
It definitely made me want a steak.
Made me hungry!

Audio-only exposure: Brand Triggers

Question #2: At what point did you realize what the brand was? What visual or audio clue led you to recognize the brand? Was there an “aha” moment?

76% of the respondents who correctly attributed the ad to Outback Steakhouse said it was due to the narrator’s voice:

From the very beginning. His voice is the give away.
beginning, the accent
right away the mans voice
Immediately. I recognized the Australian accent plus the mention of food.
When I heard the accent of the speaker
down under, Australian accent.
The moment I heard the Australian accent.
when I heard the Australian accent
Sound of the spokesperson's voice and when he said, 'down under'
the accent on word one

20% of the respondents who correctly attributed the ad to Outback Steakhouse said it was due to the music:

As soon as the music started!
the first bar of the music
Right away with the music
Immediate. Music and voice clued me in.
the music on the background
As soon as the music started
After the drums started playing
When the didgeridoo started at the beginning
Aussie accent and the music

- The **didgeridoo** a couple seconds in. The Australian accent that followed was just confirmation.

15% of the respondents who correctly attributed the ad to Outback Steakhouse said it was due to the words & phrases:

Australian guy saying ' Down Under ' and talking about food...
The guys accent gave it away and then talked a steak so I knew it was The Outback
The Australian accent and the talking about food .
talked about shrimp with an accent
The Australian accent and the steak reference
The moment he said ' You don't have to go down under ' with the Australian accent.
as soon as I hear ' down under '
About midway through the clip when the entrée was mentioned
'down under' at the beginning
By the accent of the speaker and talking about the type of food . Absolutely sealed when he said ' down under '

Question #3: Respondents to the audio clip were asked: How did the video make you feel? Did it trigger any emotion?

36% of the respondents who correctly attributed the ad to Outback Steakhouse said they were hungry:

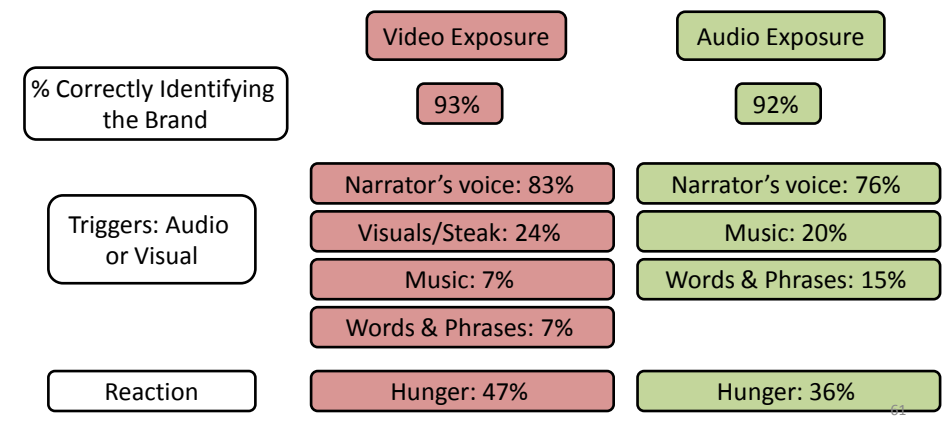
Made me salivate
Made me hungry, darnit.
Made me hungry I pictured the bloomin onion and steak knives.
made me want a steak
Immediately thought of a blooming onion appetizer
Sure, it made me hungry!
Now I'm hungry for a bloomin onion and cheese fries .
hungry.... and reminded me that I haven;t been there in awhile! need to go back.
Hungry for steak...and for their bread. I just imagined a big steak and bread, nothing else
Made me want to go get a steak

There were numerous references to being able visualize the television commercial after exposure to only the audio:

i could see the commerical
I could see steaks sizzling on a grill and shrimp. It made me feel hungry.
The restaurant seems like a fun place to eat. I picture beach scenes, bar-b-qs, good looking people smiling and dancing.
Just pictured a good steak.
I pictured the food he was talking about.
I pictured actual commercial.
I could picture some of the dishes they have
I could see the restaurant TV advertising in my head.
Mental images of yummy food from Outback!
This triggers mental images of a jeep on the beach, a campfire, and shrimp on a skewer. I think these images are in a TV commercial from awhile back.

Summary:

Outback Steak House



In the absence of any visual cues, auditory cues alone can generate brand identification metrics that rival those of visual cues, as other senses compensate for the lack of any visual stimulation. However, in this commercial we saw something that is unique to Outback: more respondents exposed to the TV clip mentioned the narrator's voice as the key "aha" branding moment (83%) than those exposed to the audio only (76%)!

Overall 80% of the “aha” branding moments in the TV clip were auditory in nature (narrator’s voice, music, and tagline) rather than visual. Not only is it a powerful brand trigger, audio is also able to produce visual images. Numerous respondents mentioned being able to “see,” “picture,” or “think of” both the television commercial and items being advertised after exposure to only the audio clip.

The “narrator”, taking both his voice and the phrases used into consideration, is the overwhelming brand trigger for both the television and audio-only clip, at 90% for both respondent groups. Nearly universal voice recognition (only rivaled by GEICO’s Gecko) means that Outback Steakhouse essentially “owns” the Australian accent, particularly when speaking about food. It also suggests that the product has received sufficient media weight to seriously consider the use of “audio” to communicate its marketing message.

Only 7% of those respondents exposed to the TV clip cited the music as a brand trigger. However, music was the second most powerful brand trigger for those exposed to the audio-only clip, mentioned by 20% of respondents. This suggests that when other senses are piqued, they can effectively fill any potential void left by the lack of visual stimuli.

Physiological impact: Over a third of respondents exposed to the audio-only clip reported that it made them feel hungry. This figure is in the ball park of the 47% who reported “hunger” after viewing the TV clip. In the absence of any visual image of the items being offered by Outback, the audio alone was over ¾’s as effective as the TV clip in triggering “hunger”.

It is not possible to experience “hunger” for specific food items without some type of mental visualization. In this case, that would involve either recalling visuals in the actual television commercial (imagery transfer) or mentally creating the described item in the world’s most powerful screen, the human brain. In either case, audio stimulation was effective at stimulating consumers’ appetites.

Conclusion:

These findings are particularly impressive in light of the fact that the audio clip used in this study was lifted verbatim from the TV commercial. If enhancements/modifications were made to reflect an audio-only form of delivery, it would likely lead to an even more impressive audio result

The data strongly suggests that primarily due to the actor’s voice, the audio components of the television commercial are as effective in generating brand awareness as the actual television commercial. Many of those exposed to the audio clip were also able to visualize the actual television commercial experiencing what is known as “imagery transfer”.

The fact that 80% of all the branding moments in the TV clip were audio confirms that the audio aspects of the commercial has been sufficiently ingrained in the minds/psyche of the consumer to consider having audio based mediums to play a more important role in communicating Outback's commercial messaging.