

Taco Bell

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)
Taco Bell	XXL Steak Nachos	:19

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

First question: After exposure to the de-branded TV commercial clip or audio track 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
Taco Bell	85%	90%	80%	85%	87%	83%

The same percentage of adults were able to identify the advertiser as Taco Bell (85%) whether the exposure was to the debranded TV clip or the audio-only version of the TV clip.

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?

55% of the respondents who correctly attributed the ad to Taco Bell said they knew it by the bong sound of the bell:

I was pretty sure it was Taco Bell but when I heard the ' ding ' I knew for sure
Bell noise at end of clip
I did not know what brand this was until the very end of the commercial when I heard the distinctive 'bell' sound of Taco Bell.
I thought it was Taco Bell and the dong at the end confirmed it.
At the end when I heard the bell
Thought I knew in the beginning, but the sound at the end synonymous with Taco Bell is what gave it away
The bell at the end
didn't get it till the *bong* at the end
The ' bong ' bell sound is unmistakable.
taco bell ' bell sound ' ' boonnnnggg! '

25% of the respondents who correctly attributed the ad to Taco Bell said they knew it from visuals such as the nachos or actors:

When I saw the nacho product
When the guy in the restaurant raised his hand , that was my aha moment
When he was eating outside out of a tray by himself because his friends didn't want cheap food
The very end... him sitting eating.
When they showed the nachos
I recognized the actor
When the guy was holding the tray in front of the car
The guy eating nachos out of a plastic container.
When the man was leaning on his car with the nachos in his hand just before the bell rang.
I realized it was Taco Bell when I saw the steak on the grill.

18% of the respondents who correctly attributed the ad to Taco Bell said it was due to the words the narrator said such as the featured menu item:

When they mentioned the XXL steak nachos since I know that is a menu item at taco bell
When I heard ' Double XL Steak Nachos '
The words Steak and Nachos with cheese ..Only means Taco Bell
When they said double xl nachos

The mention of Double XL Steak Nachos was the key. The other key indicators were the plastic food container and finally the bell at the end of the commercial.
When the announcer mentioned - we do it big, Steak Nachos
As soon as they said double XXL nachos , I knew it was Taco Bell.
When they said something about the size of the steak . I've seen the commercial before.
when i heard the narrator start talking about the xxl nachos
double xl steak nachos

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

55% of the respondents who correctly attributed the ad to Taco Bell said they were hungry or wanted to eat at Taco Bell:

Makes me want tacos for dinner.
Hunger again!
It kinda made my mouth water . The steak they showed on the grill looked really good.
Made me kinda crave the cheesy Taco Bell burrito!
It made me hungry
Hungry for taco bell steak gordida
Hungry ; Taco Bell is my favorite fast food.
Hungry!!!!
Yes. Hungry!
Made me hungry and then guilty, because I'm supposed to be on a diet.

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?

63% of the respondents who correctly attributed the ad to Taco Bell said they knew it by the bong sound of the bell:

The bell sound
The ding at the end
I recognized it with the bell at the end .
The voice, music, and content made me think of taco bell. But I wasn't entirely sure until I heard the gong . Then I knew for sure it was taco bell.
When I heard what he was talking about, the music in the commercial and the bell at the end of the commercial.

The narrator was familiar, but not a dead giveaway. The bell at the end was the solidifying moment.
The voiceover. The moment I was POSITIVE was the bell.
The mention of more steak made me think it was Taco Bell, the bell at the end confirmed it for me
When they said XXL and then at the end the bell noise
When the product was announced, I knew it was Taco Bell, plus the bell ringing at the end.

41% of the respondents who correctly attributed the ad to Taco Bell said it was due to the words the narrator said such as the featured menu item:

When nachos were mentioned
When he said XXL steak
When they started describing the food: double x nachos and steak
When I heard steak nachos
Once they mentioned xl steak
'Double XL Steak Nachos'
I knew it when they said Triple XL Steak Nachos.
When it said double x l nachos
When the announcer said XXL Nachos
When he said 'Double XL Steak Nacho's' . I knew then.

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

35% of the respondents who correctly attributed the ad to Taco Bell said they were hungry or wanted to eat at Taco Bell:

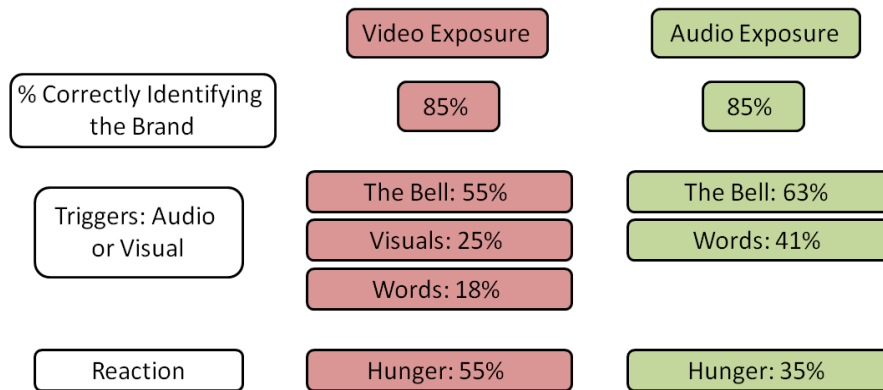
Made me feel hungry.
Kinda made me hungry actually.
Mmmm.....steak.
It made me hungry. I love steak nachos
Getting hungry and wanting to try the meal.
It worked on me. I went right out and bought some so the ad must have made me hungry.
Eager to try the nachos!
Hungry!
Made me want to get some steak nachos
Hungry, wanna try this

There were also numerous references to being able to visualize the television commercial and food described after exposure to only the audio clip:

I visualized a steakhouse then a plate of nachos . It made want some
Thick juicy steak.
I could picture the nachos from the commercial.
It triggered the mental image of nachos .
images of the commercial that i've seen several times during football games
Hungry. I could picture the menu board with the picture of the nachos that had cheese and steak on them.
Images of tacos!
Visuals of delicious, beefy nachos.
I had the image of the the steak falling into a soft shell (from the commercial)
I pictured the commercial with the guy leaving the steakhouse and eating in the parking lot.

Summary:

Taco Bell



With the absence of visual stimuli, auditory cues alone can generate brand identification as effectively as visual cues, as other senses compensate for the lack of visual stimulation. The Taco Bell campaign is the embodiment of this.

Taco Bell is the owner of one of the most identifiable sonic brands in America...the bong sound. They are successfully leveraging this audio asset in both their TV and Radio creative.

In this study, brand identification was exactly the same for Taco Bell at 85%, whether for the de-branded TV clip or the audio clip. The high recognition rate for the bell sound was the

primary reason for this. With the absence of any visual stimuli, 63% of the respondents to the audio clip referenced the bell sound at the trigger to knowing it was for Taco Bell. Even with the TV clip, 55% of respondents cited the bell sound as the primary trigger for brand identification.

Of note, the vast majority of the “aha” branding moments in the TV clip were auditory in nature. Only 26% of the brand triggers in the TV clip were visual in nature, 76% were due to what the respondents heard! In the TV clip, the 55% referenced the bell as the brand ID trigger and the 18% who cited the narrator’s words which far exceeds the 25% of respondents who cited any “visual” cues. Audio cues in the TV clip were mentioned 3x as often as visual cues.

Importantly, the ability of audio to trigger visual is also clearly seen in the comments above where numerous respondents after exposure to only the audio clip mentioned being able to “see”, “picture” or “think off” of the food in the television commercial.

Physiological impact: It was evident that exposure to both clips led to cravings and feelings of “hunger”. 1-in-3 respondents to the audio only clip said that they were hungry or wanted to eat at Taco Bell after hearing it. This compares to 1-in-2 of those exposed to the TV clip who cited the same feelings. For many, just hearing about steak nachos can lead to someone to crave them due to mental visualization. Audio stimulation can result in “visual” stimulation.

Conclusions:

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 primarily due to the distinctive bell “bong” and various verbal descriptors, that 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 76% of all the branding moments in the TV clip were audio in nature confirms that the aural 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 Taco Bell’s commercial messaging.