

# How does the accent impact on the radio advertising? The case of typical products

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**Research framework.** Radio advertising is one of the alternatives available to companies in the context of the communication mix by which communicate to the market, promote one's offer, strengthen the brand and, more generally, transfer news and information to the public.

In the competition with other media and devices, radio exploits its strengths, among which the advantage of a more effective segmentation of the target audience, specifically in the case of local radios addressing the audience of a specific geographical area and the "increased frequency", that is the repetitiveness of the message which allows it to remain imprinted in the mind, especially if associated with an effective and captivating backing track for the listener. Furthermore, radio "confers memory impact on the audience", exhibits a "long-lasting memory" (Kwon et al., 2018), creates bonds of trust and a sense of intimacy and fidelity with listeners, and tends to be cheaper than television as well as being more easily measurable in the results of advertising investments.

In the face of these strengths, there are also disadvantages. Firstly, the radio presents the risk of a more frequent zapping of the listeners with the airing of advertising and the consequent interruption of the music which causes lower listening fidelity.

Radio, compared to other media, does not allow the listener or advertiser to be able to reuse the message for future references, as case of press or web.

Another critical issue for the effectiveness of radio advertising is the distraction of the listener, who generally, in addition to listening to the radio, is simultaneously engaged in other activities (working, driving, reading) and may not be paying attention to the advertising message, therefore by not memorizing it or by not "keeping" it.

The effectiveness of radio advertising depends on numerous factors, including (i) creativity, i.e. the ability to find new solutions to old problems, (ii) the announce read live (or recorded) by the presenter, (ii) sing & sell, i.e. the musical content of the spot, (iv) the testimonial, (v) slice of life, i.e. the story, in a few seconds, of everyday life situations and (vi) the announcer's voice (Erguven, 2015).

The voice influences attitudes and perceptions on the quality and characteristics of the product, even in the absence of images, thus forcing advertisers to concentrate their efforts on identifying the voice most consistent with the characteristics and content of the message.

Psychology and marketing literature has focused on some specific aspects of the voice, studying in particular the way it impacts on consumer reactions to ads. Some of the most important factors are accent, speech rate and vocal pitch which cause different reactions based on the importance attributed by the listeners, the gender of the announcer and the gender of the listeners (Morales et al., 2012; Apple et al., 1979; Street et al., 1983; Chattopadhyay et al., 2003; Crystal, 2008; Scherer, 1979; Dahl, 2010; Addington, 1968).

It has been demonstrated that listeners prefer products advertised by a speaker with a standard accent, that accents influence how well listeners remember the ad information and that speech rate impacts on persuasiveness of an ad advertisement, that men who speak faster are judged to be more competent, socially attractive, truthful and persuasive than are men who speak more slowly.

Differences in tone of voice are also important: "lower (higher) auditory pitch used in marketing communications cues perceptions of larger (smaller) physical size in the associated product" (Lowe & Haws, 2017), ads narrated by announcers with lower pitched voice are more effective than the same ads spoken by an announcer with a higher pitched voice.

Voice quality and gender voice play an important role too.

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The personality inferences that listeners make based on hearing different voice qualities have a great importance in determining the listeners reactions. When a listener hears a voice that has qualities associated with higher levels of educations or status, the listeners are likely to believe that the speaker is high status or well educated.

Therefore, voice qualities are interpreted differently according to the gender because the reactions to a male or female voice are different (Wiener & Chartrand, 2014; Perona & Barbeito, 2008; Furnham and Paltzer, 2010; Martin-Santana et. Al, 2017).

As stated by Wiener & Chartrand (2014), if the ad is aimed at a female audience and has a female announcer, it would be more effective if the speaker does not have a creaky voice. If the announcer is male, it would be beneficial for him to have a creaky voice.

In countries where there is similarity in the use of male voices in radio commercials, it has been shown that low voices are considered more serious, believable, confident and powerful than high voices which are instead considered sweet, familiar and cheerful (Perona & Barbeito, 2008). Furthermore, it may also be due to a belief that because male voices are generally deeper, they sound more commanding, convincing, and persuasive than female voices. (Furnham and Paltzer, 2010).

Martin-Santana et. Al (2017) demonstrated that the prevalence of the male voice in some markets, such as the Spanish one, is neither justified in terms of effectiveness with non-gender-image products. They argue that to attract the listener's attention, increase audience awareness of the product or brand, and improve awareness, the advertiser should use low-pitched voices, which increase recall levels.

If the advertiser's goal is to create or improve public attitudes towards the product or brand, he would use the low-pitched female voice for its greater ability to change attitudes, particularly for those who.

A further factor which affects the effectiveness of the message and, in particular, directs the attitude of the listener, is the credibility of the source and, therefore, of the announcer. The latter can be analyzed along two components: cognitive and affective.

The former includes reliability and competence, while the latter is identified with attractiveness.

Expertise is "the ability of a communicator to be perceived as a source of valid statements based on his level of education, his own competence and educational background, which allow him to pass certain messages into a valid way. Reliability is the level of acceptance of the communicator and of the transmitted message, that is, listeners believe that the source can be trusted to provide objective and accurate information. Attractiveness is the level of physical attractiveness given to the source by the listener and, to a lesser extent, the emotional attractiveness of the source (Bearden & Netemeyer, 1999).

An important variable for the impact on advertising effectiveness is represented by the type of presenter used in the production of the message.

We can distinguish the endorser into famous and not famous or we can carry out a more detailed analysis which leads us to distinguish according to whether he is a celebrity, a consumer, an expert professional or an employee of the company.

The literature has paid great attention to the relevance of these figures with reference to means other than the radio which has instead received less space from researchers (Mittelstaedt et al, 2000). What emerges in literature analysis is that the absence of images in the radio causes the latter to use celebrities to a less predominant extent than in the context of television which, based on the notoriety of the testimonial, can determine success of the brand, in particular where there is congruence between endorsers of the personality of a brand (Fleck et. Al., 2012).

A well-known and authoritative testimonial can give the message greater effectiveness since the listener, perceiving him for these characteristics as a reliable and therefore sincere person, shows himself well disposed towards the product/service and attentive to the suggestions contained in the commercial and to the description that the announcer himself does. This leads to prefer the use of the pronoun "I" by the latter which shows an involvement towards the product, a real conviction about its qualities and performance.

However, if this is true in the case of television advertising, where the visual elements reinforce the effectiveness of the message when conveyed by a celebrity, in the case of radio, where there is a lack of these elements, a different situation occurs since this medium is more inclined to make use of voices that represent low-profile personalities to the detriment of celebrities who star in advertising in other media. Instead, there is a prevalence of the voices of the Presenter and the Company's employee and also of voices of real people (Perellò Oliver et al., 2018)

The accent plays a key role in qualifying the voice of the speaker during the transmission of the message. Since there are no images, the voice can suggest his appearance and personal characteristics (Krauss et al., 2002); it acts like a salient vocal cue, transmitting minimal information about them and influence social responses (Sebastian & Ryan, 1985).

Since accent affects listeners' impressions of speakers, selecting the right spokesperson to transmit a message is a complex decision that implies evaluating a series of key qualities, such credibility and attractiveness (Heaton & Nygaard, 2011; Stafford et al., 2002).

Advertisers need to consider the different reactions of listeners when hearing different accents, depending on whether the speaker has a Standard Accent or a Local Accent. The first describes forms that are generally accepted by the majority of the society and provides no obvious indication to the speaker's geographic or social background, while the Local Accent is almost the opposite.

For example, it has been shown that a standard English accent exerts a particular influence on the perception of source credibility compared to the local accent which is associated with a negative social stereotype and decreases perceived trust and similarity, which results in an erosion of the credibility of the spokesperson and the failure to achieve the desired behaviors (Lalwani et al., 2005; Deshields et al., 1997; Deshields & De Los Santos, 2000; Stafford et al., 2002; Reinares-Lara et al., 2016).

**Purpose of the paper.** The aim of the research is to investigate the potential of radio communication for typical local products. Starting from the significant potential of those goods, from the deep roots in the territory of origin and from the possibilities offered by radio advertising, we will analyze the ways in which it can help strengthen the link between products and consumers who live in the same territory.

The typical products are characterized by a close link with the territory of origin. In addition to stimulating the need for direct knowledge of places, they can become goods whose value transcends their intrinsic utility, since they determine complementary effects related to the sensations (Schmitt, 1999) that they are able to generate.

For this reason, it is necessary to use communication formulas that make them recognizable, so as to achieve notoriety, create value for businesses and their local area of origin. For example, typical agri-food productions have an identity - and in strategic terms can be defined as "uniqueness" - deriving from certain factors, tangible and intangible, such as (Altili 2010; D'Amico, 2004 and 2002; Carboni and Quaglia, 2001): traditions, uses, customs, history, culture, soil and climatic conditions, landscape and production methods consolidated over time.

In this sense, being able to link these products to the tourist potential (where present) of their territories of origin can be a useful strategy to corroborate their reputation. It is the cognitive potential naturally present in typical products, in order to make them part of a whole, through targeted and coordinated experiential marketing actions, useful for communicating the brand-territory union, thus contributing to the creation of a competitive advantage for such productions and for their places of origin. To succeed in such intent, it is essential that companies experience their territories as an indispensable asset for the mutual development and therefore adopt a perspective that connotes them as well-established businesses.

All the above factors represent the heritage of a territory, intended as productive field (Baccarani and Golinelli, 2011), as much as the link between the product and place of origin (Fait, 2010; Fait and Trio, 2011; Maizza and Iazzi, 2011; Maizza et al., 2013; Scroll, 2013; Scorrano et al., 2013; Fait et al., 2014; Iaia et al., 2016). The latter is to be found in those characteristic elements of a product, which come from specific production area and, therefore, cannot be replicated or "exported" to other contexts (Mastroberardino, 2004; Maizza et al., 2003). The brand-territory bond, therefore, manifests itself in that unicum that is created in the mind of the consumer, for that generates and increases the notoriety of both; this, until the land becomes synonymous of its own products and becomes a loyal brand itself, creating value for a plurality of subjects (it is sufficient to think, for example, of the wines produced in Chianti, Bordeaux, Montalcino, etc.).

**Methodology.** The purpose of the research is twofold. The first is to ascertain what choices businesses producing typical local products make on the use of radio as a means of promoting their commercial offerings.

To this end, in-depth interviews is going to be conducted with entrepreneurs and managers in order to analyze: (i) the communication policies they have adopted and those that they propose to employ in the coming year in perspective; (ii) their attitude and propensity toward the radio medium; (iii) delve into which channel is considered most consistent with their target market; (iv) analyze the type of message considered most relevant; and (v) learn about preferences for the speaker's voice and accent (SA or LA).

The second objective concerns consumer attitudes towards radio advertising and the impact of the accent of the speaker's voice. For this purpose, a random sample of listeners will be involved to listening to two commercial advertising a typical local product, one with SA and another with LA.

On the one hand, speaker credibility will be measured using expertise and trustworthiness as variables; on the other hand, the cognitive level, affective level, and conative level of the listener's response will be analysed through a test.

**Results.** Since this is an ongoing study, results are not ready yet. Researchers are going to collect them.

**Research limitations.** A limitation of the research is represented by the use of a single factor of the speaker's voice (the accent) without considering the influence that other elements can exert, such as- for example- the tone, the reading speed, the gender of the speaker.

The significance of the results regarding the credibility of the latter and the listener's response could therefore be consequently limited. Another limit could concern the type of sample involved in the research which is made up solely of listeners living in the same area where the advertised products are produced.

**Managerial implications.** The research would have interesting managerial implications for managers and businesses, particularly those that produce typical local products.

The results of the study, in fact, may make it possible to obtain useful indications concerning the attitude and response of consumers to a radio commercial using a voice with local accent, as opposed to another with standard accent, in the promotion of a typical product of their region of residence.

This will help guide business choices regarding radio communication and learn which tools and modes of communication are most relevant and present the greatest opportunities for success in dealing with the market.

**Originality of the paper.** The originality of this research is represented by the choice to cross a topic which is typical of psychology applied to marketing to a local context such as the Apulian one and, specifically, to a particular typology of products, the typical ones.

**Keywords:** radio, voice, consumers, advertising, typical products

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