Production and Use of Packaging Elements in Radio

Concepts, Functions and Styles in Transnational Comparison

Golo Föllmer

Research Questions and Approach

Call signs, interval signals, jingles, on-air sound design, packaging and radio imaging are terms for a range of broadcast elements that were developed very early on in the history of radio, and elements of this kind have been in use ever since in literally every radio station on earth, most probably at increasing rates. As this chapter will argue, they are far more than ornaments or promotional interruptions, as occasional statements from radio listeners and even from radio practitioners would suggest. Instead, I argue that they should be understood as a crucial part of radio's content, its formal construction and its general auditory experience.

Since there has been little coherent scientific examination of the topic to date, a transnational approach has been chosen here to try to grasp the nature and scope of the phenomenon at hand. By interviewing 21 expert practitioners from five European countries about required competences for packaging production, terminology and functions of radio packaging, the study aims to draw a general sketch of techniques and purposes of packaging. It also aims to determine to what extent there are cultural, national or language-based specifics governing packaging practices in different countries.

In Part I, the article gives an overview of the history of packaging, its various elements, and its functions, informed by existing literature.[1] In Part II, the methodological approach and the results of the interview study with expert practitioners are discussed.

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1 | Part I draws upon the author's German language article 'Jingle' (forthcoming).

PART I: A BRIEF THEORY AND HISTORY OF RADIO PACKAGING

Terminology

The term 'jingle' was originally used to describe advertising clips for any consumer product in which all information, including product name and advertising message, is sung. In today's professional parlance it refers to pre-produced components of on-air promotion, in which station names or claims are mostly sung chorally to instrumental accompaniment (cf. Karmen 1989: 20; Haas/Frigge/Zimmer 1991: 473; Goldhammer 1995: 215). In contrast to advertising jingles, which radio stations broadcast for a fee as external or product advertising, these are also referred to as promotional jingles. Colloquially 'jingle' stands for all kinds of pre-produced audio clips that somehow serve the self-promotion of a radio station.

Today, the jingle in the professional sense of the word, i.e. as a sung clip, is only one of many types of pre-produced on-air promotion. The term 'packaging elements' (German: 'Verpackungselemente') is used in Germany for all forms of pre-produced on-air promotion – including those broadcast elements that serve solely to structure the program and have no primarily promotional function (e.g. a 'news separator'). Therefore, packaging elements are discussed in their full variety below. Jingles are considered separately both in their historical origin and as a stylistic phenomenon.

Up to now, packaging elements have hardly been systematically examined in scholarship. In view of their massive use in almost all radio formats, it seems obvious that not only the relatively well-researched areas of editorial content and music influence the listeners' attention, moods and attitudes, but also the arsenal of jingles, show openers, bumpers, donuts etc. (for definitions see below) plays an essential role. Studies of the design, use and t function of packaging elements therefore promise highly relevant findings from the cultural sciences. They can provide information on how the attention, mood and attitude of the listeners are directed in the interaction of all broadcast elements. The influence of different radio formats, historical conditions and cultural contexts can be observed by means of comparative study, as undertaken here. In addition to the expert interviews used here, historical source analyses, participant observation during production processes, product analyses and methods of empirical listening research (cf. Föllmer 2016: 301f.) are also promisingmethods for this purpose.

History

The oldest surviving jingle was created in 1926 for the product 'Wheaties'. The 30-second rhymed advertising text in an *a capella* choir arrangement was broadcast by the radio station WCCO in Minnesota. The success of advertising jingles was followed by promotional jingles, when the rapid spread of the so-called Top 40 format on US radio around 1954 led to ever greater similarity and competition between programs. Self-promotion was seen as an inherent necessity of the Top 40 format because the stations' playlists, and thus sound, of only 40 hits hardly differed. As Wolfgang Hagen emphasizes, it is impossible for anyone to "hear a format radio station as a 'radio wholeness'. So it remains uncertain whether it is 'there' if 'I' do not hear it. [...] So all that remains is to paint it onto a prospectus. This is the reason why explicit radio marketing is indispensable, which in the American radio market therefore developed at once and immediately together with the 'Top 40' concept" (2005: 322; transl. by the author).

The step from the original advertising jingle to the promotional jingle also formally meant a connection with the call sign already in use since the amateur radio era of the 1910s. The call signal should regularly identify the transmitter so that listeners with detector receivers that did not provide a frequency indication could orient themselves in the frequency spectrum. With the introduction of frequency scales on tube receivers, this function lost importance (cf. Thürmer 1942: 46). In the USA, however, the regulatory authority FCC still prescribes today that the official 'call letters' (four-digit letter sequence) and the broadcasting location be named every hour near the full hour (cf. Reese 2010: 127).

Call signs also merged with so-called interval signals. These had the task of filling setup breaks between individual broadcasts in the exclusively live operation of the first radio decade and served as time windows in which connected stations could be switched on and off. In the beginning, for example, alarm clock ticking was used because it was easy to create. With the introduction of sound reproduction technologies of broadcast quality in the 1930s, music could be used that signaled national or regional culture (cf. Thürmer 1942: 46). Memorability played a major role in this. In addition to the voice that named the station, a single instrument (often piano, bells, glockenspiel) usually intoned a concise and well-known musical motif at a sustained tempo. According to Susan Douglas, "Broadcasters had to figure out how people would remember specific information and particular personalities. In the process radio voices – from comedians and newscasters to DJs – introduced Americans, over the years, to the concept of audio signatures – from 'Holy Mackerel' or 'This... is London' to the howl of a wolfman" (1999: 12).

The introduction of multi-track technology in the 1950s led to increasingly complex productions. From 1959, the Cart standard, using tape loops and sensors, simplified the use of jingles even more by making the carrier medium

ready to play again by itself after it had been played. With the help of digital technology, loading and playback of packaging elements is now mostly automated and allows dynamic changes, such as changes of instrumentation, during playback.

In Europe, call signs were still in use until the 1970s. Only with the introduction of competition from private radio providers – peripherally by commercial pirate stations starting in the 1960s, officially in the Federal Republic of Germany with the introduction of the dual broadcasting system from 1984 – did a conversion from simple call signs to complexly produced and increasingly differentiated packaging elements take place. Stylistic standards of the US radio market played an important role in this process.

Types, Styles and Production

Stylistically, the classical jingle is characterized by a *stretto* five- to seven-part vocal movement with opulent orchestral accompaniment (cf. Rudin 2010: 392). Vocal groups such as The Modernaires, The Four Freshmen and Mel Tormé and His Mel-Tones were the musical role models for them (cf. Deutsch 2009: unpag.). The layering of several successive recordings of the same polyphonic vocal movement (the so-called stacking technique) gives the voices a characteristic depth and intensity. The orchestration of the instrumental accompaniment was long oriented towards the big band style of the swing era, indeed long after the style had faded from musical fashion. This peculiarity contributed to the fact that jingles are regarded as an independent, original radio genre. Later on, the instrumental movement developed more strongly than the vocal movement, for example by adapting contemporary influences from bossa nova and rock'n'roll and even complete individual styles such as those of the Beach Boys or the Beatles (see ibid.). The voices were repeatedly made more attractive by various fashionable effects, e.g. the robotic sounding 'Sonovox', gargled passages or the unusually high voice of Gleni Rutherford, who used the so-called whistle register (cf. ibid.).

The principle of syndication is essential for the production processes and economy of the jingle business. This works in such a way that jingle packages are created on behalf of a certain station, but are then sold (at more favorable conditions) to many other stations by only re-recording the station name and, if necessary, the slogan, while retaining the choral and orchestral parts.

Bill Meeks founded PAMS (Production Advertising Merchandising Service) in 1951, the first company specializing exclusively in jingle production, which became a trendsetter and market leader for decades and also had a formative effect in Europe (cf. Rudin 2010, 392). After decades of being dominated by jingles in the classic PAMS style by a handful of companies from Dallas, Texas, the production market has now become internationalized and differentiated.

The classic jingle with its characteristic sound is still in use today, but it has been complemented by many other forms and styles. A cursory listing of a selection of important types of packaging elements makes it clear how differently they are used. Definitions sometimes differ considerably (see Haas/ Frigge/Zimmer 1991: 444f.; Hall/Hall 1977: 349f.; La Roche/Buchholz 2013: 300f.; Wolff 2009: 281f.), which is why they have been adapted for the following overview: Jingle (sung 'Claim'/station name), Image-ID (spoken 'Claim'/slogan over audio logo), Show-Opener (open programs or parts of the day), Bumper (Intro for a piece or a section), Stinger (Outro for a piece or a section), Drop-In (speech line or sound, usually 'dry', i.e. without music), donut (finished package of 'bumper', music bed with live presenter and 'Stinger'), trailer or promo (announcement of upcoming program elements), sound effect (sound such as a telephone bell), sounder (electronically generated signal sound), transition (musical transition between two hit titles) and music bed (program- or rubric-specific instrumental music, over which live moderation takes place).

Functions

Radio practitioners attribute very specific functions to packaging elements. These can be discussed well on the basis of various internationally used generic terms.

In Germany, the relevant literature most frequently uses the terms 'packaging elements' (*Verpackungselemente*) or 'packaging' (*Verpackung*). These terms are analogous to the concept of 'framing', meaning the use of formalized frameworks in conversations. According to this concept, speakers change the framework of a certain reference genre by referring their rhetoric and way of speaking to generally known everyday or media scenarios (greetings, interviews, etc.) (Tolson 2006: 51). Likewise, packaging elements activate specific contexts by means of ways of speaking, musical and tonal codes. For example, when changing from entertaining to informing program components, expectations are 'switched over' by signals. For news, for example, the typical fanfares and the Morse code beeping are often used.

The similarly common term 'layout' emphasizes the orientation function by means of auditory marking of program elements. The concept of 'sign-posting' can describe the orientation function of packaging elements. "Radio has nothing but different kinds of *sounds*, some of which it uses to establish the beginnings and ends of programs for us" (Crisell 1994: 6; emphasis in original). According to Andrew Crisell, sign-posting in the time-based medium of radio replaces the table of contents, headlines and rubric labeling, which can be grasped at a glance in spatial media such as the newspaper (see also Shingler/ Wieringa 1998: 136). Using such elements, however, radio acoustically reproduces the orientation aid of the newspaper's graphic design. As an example, Crisell equates a typographic distinction in the newspaper (e.g. bold) with the

tone of a voice in the radio, and accordingly the graphic marking with colors or lines with the jingles, as well as the photo with the actuality. He concludes: "Hence we can regard the music and jingles [...] as a form of radio typography" (1996: 114). Similarly, Martin Shingler and Cindy Wieringa understand packaging elements as "aural punctuation, like commas, semicolons, colons and full stops" (1998: 64), which emphasize the syntax of the program flow.

The commonly used international term 'imaging' refers to the image-forming function of packaging elements. On the one hand, image building takes place massively via the music selection of a station (cf. Shingler/Wieringa 1998: 63). However, with the concept of 'footing' (cf. Goffman 1981: 126f.), the prosody and tone of the moderators and the entire design of packaging elements can also be described as identifiers of specific codes that are used to construct a media-effective 'persona' of both the moderators and the station as a whole (cf. Tolson 2006: 46). Packaging elements as pre-produced expressions of this image are of great importance, since they can be constructed down to the smallest detail and are more calculable in use than moderators who depend on their form that day. "They are a highly condensed expression of all that a station stands for, capturing in seconds the essence of a station's character, style and output" (Shingler/Wieringa 1998: 63).

Practice

Packaging is often designed to attract attention through high intensity, density and changes of production elements as well as to signal positive values such as liveliness, topicality and happiness. According to empirical studies by Robert Potter and Jinmyung Choi, radio stations are successful with this among their target groups: "[T]he more complex a message was structurally, the more positive the attitudes, the greater the arousal and self-reported attention resulted, and the greater the memory" (2006: 416).

In addition to this positive emotional connotation of the program, constantly repeating the station name is regarded as particularly important, because the amount of revenue per minute per advertisement is based on the station's reach, i.e. its average number of listeners. Since this is determined in many countries (e.g. in Germany) by telephone surveys that query which stations you have recently heard, remembering the station name plays an important economic role and is to be promoted by frequent repetition in jingles, among other things. An investigation of advertising clips seems to confirm this mechanism. The frequent repetition of identical content promotes both memorization and the positive evaluation of advertising content (cf. Domenichini/Gaßner 2015: 272).

The motivation to provide a station with an 'image' and thus to stage it as an 'identity' with the most coherent, recognizable characteristics possible can be attributed to the fact that many listeners perceive radio as a lifestyle medium,

whereby they often choose those stations that reflect their own values and style (cf. Norberg 1996: 6). Music has an ambiguity here. On the one hand, it is seen as the most important product feature and central marketing instrument of many broadcasters (cf. Shingler/Wieringa 1998: 63). On the other hand, practitioners assume that music does not develop sufficient binding power and so it must be additionally created by packaging (cf. Norberg 1996: 17).

Microstructurally, today's packaging elements contain an immense number of different production elements that are assembled and mixed in the recording studio, including music (originally produced for the jingle or taken from hits or databases of so-called 'production music'), voice (usually a specially cast 'station voice'), natural sounds and a broad spectrum of electronically generated sounds. An example of the latter typical for radio is the swoosh, a provocative glissando hiss that exists in countless variations and introduces or exits many packaging elements. Due to its atonal character, the swoosh can be played over the end and beginning of any music without harmonic 'friction' and is therefore suitable for connecting two program elements, e.g. in transitions. At the same time, its intensive broadband impulse attracts attention for the often subsequent naming of the station name or claim. Similar descriptions could be created for many other production elements and would be helpful e.g. in comparative investigations of packaging elements.

PART II: INTERVIEW STUDY WITH EXPERT PRACTITIONERS ON RADIO PACKAGING

Research Aims and Methodology

Between January 2014 and September 2015, interviews with 21 packaging experts from five European countries were conducted. The transnational study was done with three goals in mind:

(1) A basic objective was to explore the terminological inventory of radio packaging experts. Literature states a broad and sometimes confusing range of terms, even more so when taking sources from different countries into account. While speaking to experts in pre-study explorative conversations, discussions often faltered due to misunderstandings resulting from terminological incoherence, for instance about the meaning of the terms 'jingle', 'layout' or 'packaging'. Terminological clarification therefore seemed necessary. However, since other aspects were at the core of the study, interviewees were not systematically asked about their terminology. Instead, they were asked to state their use of specific terms as they came up.

(2) The study's core objective was to evaluate a set of circulating functions or 'aims' of radio packaging. As in the case of terminology, functionality is dealt with rather disjointedly in literature. Sources recurrently refer to two functions, namely (A) 'to establish a station idenity' and (B) 'to create a broadcast flow' (cf. Haas/Frigge/Zimmer 1991: 449; Goldhammer 1995: 217-218; Rudin 2010: 391; La Roche/Buchholz 2013: 301). However, these two functions are not always phrased this coherently, their importance is rated differently, and occasionally additional functions are also mentioned. Clarifying this issue was the core aim of the study, driven by the assumption that the functionality and thus the importance of radio packaging as such are generally underestimated. Regarded in the larger scope of research on the general aesthetics of radio, a step towards a more profound understanding of radio packaging's functions appeared crucial. In the study, the first question (after the warm-up question about the interviewee's professional background and current position) asked about the interviewee's understanding of radio packaging's functions by asking them to comment and rate the two functions mentioned above .[2] This aspect was then explored in-depth, first by asking about strategies used by the interviewee at his radio station to realize the desired functions.[3] Second, the interviewee was asked to listen to examples brought by the researcher as well as examples proposed by the interviewee him-/herself. Listening was followed by discussions about different aspects of each example.[4]

(3) Finally, the study aimed to survey whether and to what extent experts adopt national and transnational standards in radio packaging. Listening experience and previous expert advice had led to the hypothesis on the one hand that packaging producers follow (and help develop) country-specific styles. On the other hand, it was hypothesized that they aim to apply international standards. The study meant to identify examples of both of these strategies by asking the interviewees whether they listen across borders in their professional

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2 | Question 1a: "Imaging is often assumed to have two functions: Sustain and structure broadcast flow (connect, divide, mark etc.) and establish a station sound / station identity (›Imaging‹). How do you judge the importance of these two aspects? Are they equal? Are there other aspects?"

3 | Question 1b: "What do you/does your station do to reach these goals? How is production done? What are underlying concepts and production steps? How is packaging used on air?" Question 1c: "Which role in packaging play musical style / instruments? What are ›no-go‹ sounds / top sounds for your station? Which role in packaging style of vocal delivery / the vocal talent? What makes a voice appropriate for the format and target group?"

4 | Question 2: "Please describe the listening example: Which radio format and target group does it belong to? What type of packaging is it? What is its function? Which elements make you think the way you do? Does the example fulfill its function well? In how far is the example similar or different from examples at your station?"

work, whether they adopt styles from other countries and in how far they have the impression to work along a local or national style.[5]

The study was designed as a transnational and trans-format study. Prior conversations had suggested that terminology and assumptions about functionality both vary between experts from different countries as well as between experts from different radio formats. Thus, a study describing practices observed in only one country or in only one type of radio format, even if correct in itself, might have been of limited value when presented to people from other backgrounds. A comparative, transnational, and trans-format interview study appeared capable of grasping common denominators as well as differences between different local or national conventions as well as between different radio formats. Due to resource restrictions, no attempt was made to reach representative results. As it was the first study undertaken with this focus, it was instead decided to gather an understanding of the variabilty and degree of agreement that can be found in a diverse sphere.

Semi-structured interviews with 21 packaging professionals were conducted in personal meetings of 45 to 120 minutes. Experts in Germany, Italy, Denmark, the UK and Austria were chosen according to their individual expertise. Requests asked for 'the person responsible for packaging' at the station, while it was made clear that this could mean a head of department just as well as an executive producer. Only experts from highly acclaimed radio stations or production companies were considered. The study attempted to involve radio stations of major formats, approximating market shares.[6] Geographical reachability played a role in the choice of countries.[7]

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5 | Question 3: "Do international models or radio imaging play a role in your production processes? Do you focus more on local or international models? Are there general, transnational, worldwide rules that apply to certain formats, audiences, listening modes or programme types and to radio in general (as opposed to television, online media etc.)? Are there typical national styles in radio? What makes a radio sound typically French, American or Italian?"

6 | Interviewees represented: Adult Contemporary Radio (7), Cultural Channels (4), Contemporary Hit Radio (3), News / Info Channel (2), International Service (1), unspecified / different formats (3).

7 | Interviewees were (in chronological order of the interviews): Uwe Wassermann (RBB 88.8, Berlin), Finn Marquardt (freelance producer, Copenhagen), Morten Steingrim & Philipp Meisner (DR, Copenhagen), Stephan Randecker & Kiron Patka (SWR 1, Stuttgart), Frank Berge & Martin Spiller (HR Info, Frankfurt/M), Mario Sacchi (RTL, Mailand), Marco Lolli & Andrea Borgnino (RAI Due, Rome), Piero Pugliese (RAI Tre, Rome), Matt Fisher (BBC Radio One, London), Ben Motley (BBC World Service, London), Wolfram Kähler (WDR 3, Cologne), Angela Traud (WDR, Cologne), Torsten Remy (WDR 1Live, Cologne), Christian Wilke (Dradio Wissen, Cologne), Rüdiger Landgraf (KroneHit Radio, Vienna), Andreas Wilke (Spreeradio, Berlin), Ulrich Weichler (Audiowerk, Berlin). With the exception of informal, pre-test conversations with Uwe Wassermann, all interviews followed the question scheme of the semi-structured questionnaire described in footnotes above.

Data analysis of the transcribed interviews was conducted in the software Max-QDA. An initial, theory-driven code set was expanded with new inductively derived codes to an overall of 60 codes. Main code categories were institution type & personal self-description, functions of packaging, packaging production & usage process, sound material used in packaging, transnationality and overall principles in packaging & terminology. Quantitative indicators were used for such purposes as assessing the use of professional terms and self-descriptions.[8]
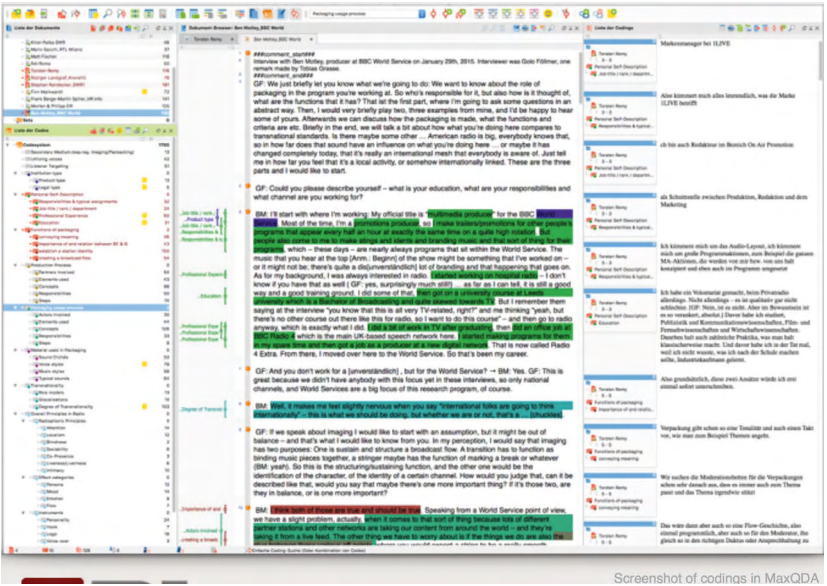

Screenshot of codings in MaxQDA

Figure 1: Example of content analysis in the software MaxQDA. On the left, the code set is shown; the center shows a passage from one interview with codings colored according to different codes; on the right, passages from different interviews marked with one specific code are shown.

Results

A first, unanticipated insight originated from the warm-up question about the interviewee's professional background and current position. Formal professional training as well as job titles proved to vary widely between subjects. Approximately half of the subjects belonged more or less to the management sector and were responsible for station packaging, but did not usually produce it themselves. For some of those, packaging was only one of several respon-

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sibilities they had, as in the case of program directors, quality or brand managers. Others were responsible for packaging for most or all of their time, as in the case of heads of production or heads of sound design. The other half belonged to executive personnel. Some of them were trained as sound technicians, and producing packaging was one of several recurring tasks they had. Others worked exclusively as producers for on-air design or as editors of on-air promotion.

Subjects consistently stated that required skills were almost never imparted to them, but they had to acquire them autonomously in learning-by-doing processes. This proved valid for typical packaging design skills as well as for an understanding of the individual station sound's nature. As Ben Motley, producer at BBC World Service, puts it:

> When it comes to making promotions for [...] the World Service: No-one ever sits you down and says 'this is how we do things.' It's just something that you pick up by listening, like a process of osmosis really. (Interview with Ben Motley, 29.1.2015, London)

Objective (1) of this study, a basic exploration of the terminological inventory of radio packaging experts, brought a set of most commonly used terms to light. In total, the terms 'sound design', 'on-air design' and 'layout' were used most consensually as generic terms for the trade. 'Imaging' was used by British experts only, although recently the term has become more widespread.[9] The initial research term 'packaging' proved to be used almost exclusively in Germany ('Verpackung'), while the historic 'jingle' was used by two thirds of the subjects, but only rarely as generic term (see the discussion of the term's different uses above). For the purpose of consistency, this article will stick to its initial term 'packaging'.

From the experts' description of their work, the most frequently mentioned types of pre-produced packaging elements were identified to be 'Station IDs' or 'Idents'; 'Showopeners'; 'Promos' or 'Teasers'; 'Bumpers'; 'Stingers'; 'Transitions' or 'Sweepers'; 'Drop-Ins' and 'Music Beds'. In some cases, the replacement of old / outdated terms by current ones could be identified (i.e. the former 'Trailer' is now commonly called 'Teaser').

In addition, a number of important production elements have been identified that are used as raw material or building blocks to produce packaging elements. Those include 'Swooshes' or 'Wooshes', 'Station Voices', 'Hooks', 'Artist Endorsements', 'Logos' and 'Claims'. Some elements, like for instance 'Music Beds', are used as production elements as well as packaging elements.

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9 | Two international conferences were held under the title 'Imaging Days' in the Netherlands in 2014 and 2015.

The study's core objective (2), evaluating the functions of radio packaging, resulted in an extension of the initial two-function model. Experts confirmed the importance of the two functions proposed to them, but differentiated the picture. Function (A), 'establishing a distinct station identity', was confirmed as an important and permanent task as such. However, for function (B), 'creating a broadcast flow', answers suggested broadening the concept to 'structuring content' in the sense of offering orientation, calling for attention, creating consistency (in the sense of the initial 'broadcast flow') and regulating overall energy and pace of a program.

Depending on their station's format, answers varied. Matt Fisher from then CHR station BBC Radio One insisted to focus on music: "So what we want to do is maintain the music flow..." (Interview, 28.1.2015, London). Wolfram Kähler from the cultural channel WDR3 focused on the structuring function: "... in order to separate and announce, really send a signal: 'Attention! Something ends or starts here.'" (Interview, 31.3.2015, Cologne) Rüdiger Landgraf from the AC station KroneHit Radio valued this function generally less important in his station: "In format radio the ID function is more important than ... structuring shows..." (Interview, 5.5.2015, Vienna).

Most importantly, a third function of packaging emerged in the discussions. Several experts emphasized packaging's additional task of 'conveying meaning'. In their view, this includes momentary regulation of energy, pace or 'punch' of the program. Tosten Remy from the CHR station WDR 1Live explains: "Packaging sets [...] tonality and [...] pulse, how you approach topics for instance." (Interview, 1.4.2015, Cologne) As Remy's statement indicates, it also includes laying appropriate moods or 'tonalities' for specific topics, for featured personalities or shaping the attitude towards a topic or personality. Packaging thus also serves as non-verbal announcement, conveying certain meaning to an upcoming subject or classifying it in a specific sense. Figure 2 shows an extended model of packaging functions.

Question (3), whether and to what extent experts adopt national and transnational standards in radio packaging, showed very clear results. Experts confirmed that listening across borders, visits to foreign radio markets and contact to packaging producers working internationally is a standard in radio packaging. Several subjects emphasized their deliberate orientation towards foreign stations when searching for new ideas in their packaging work. However, they also emphasized that transnational inspiration always has to be format specific. Torsten Remy from the CHR station WDR 1Live for instance pointed to BBC Radio One as their major role model: "Of course we have a look. And to be honest: BBC One is THE reference." (Interview, 1.4.2015, Cologne) In fact, several interviewees judged the radio format to be a stronger influence on their work than cultural specifics.
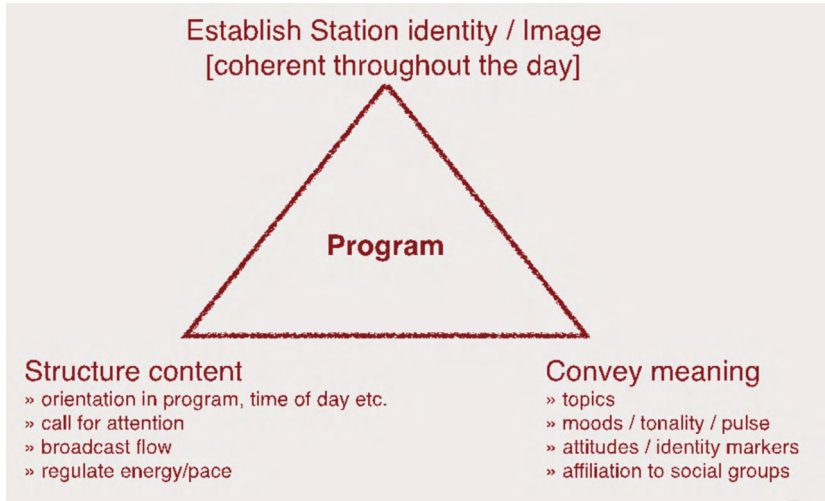
Figure 2: Extended model of packaging functions.

I think it's more of a format thing than a country thing. In Europe, I don't see huge differences. (Interview with Torsten Remy, 1.5.2015, Cologne)

If you go to an Italian commercial station you will find this sound […] very similar to every top 40 station in the world. (Interview with Andrea Borgnino, 29.10.2014, Rome)

Formats are stronger than cultural constitution. (Interview with Rüdiger Landgraf, 5.5.2015, Vienna)

However, experts confirmed the existence of certain national and regional differences. They observed single characteristics like the trend in Danish packaging not to sing any jingles. They also reported that North Americans like brass orchestras, Austrians love melodic jingles and Latin Americans use a lot of reverb on voices in packaging.

Furthermore, overall impressions of national production styles were stated, like the image of a 'big American sound' which appears very loud and punchy, of German packaging being not as 'overproduced' as American radio and that Germans prefer a more natural sound design.

Conclusion

In summary, the clear results suggest that the methods were chosen appropriately. Some terminological confusion could be clarified by correlating terms found in literature with the individual terminologies of the experts.

Most importantly, three core functions were distinguished: (1) the establishment of a coherent station image through musical, tonal, vocal and linguistic means; (2) the structuring of the program content in order to provide orientation in the hourly rhythm and in the daily and weekly program on the one hand; to highlight the transitions between individual program elements in a syntactic structure on the other hand; sections are thereby clearly separated from one another e.g.; (3) the transmission of information in order to arouse curiosity about program content, address special listener groups and establish topic-specific expectations and moods.

Furthermore, the weight of transnational influences was put into perspective: On the one hand, experts made clear that today's radio formats are stronger than cultural constitutions. On the other hand, rather specific national or language-based styles like i.e. a 'big American sound' vs. a 'more natural German' packaging style were identified.

Finally, a vast amount of profound arguments added up to a strong claim: that today packaging – if well crafted and fine-tuned to the needs of individual programs – is much more than self-promotion: it is a fundamental component of potentially every radio program, because it helps listeners identify a program, find orientation in the program structure, and adjust to changes in program content.

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