



Sound Aesthetics: An Assessment of Radio Jingles in Two Nigerian Radio Stations

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ABSTRACT :

Jingles contribute greatly to the sustenance of radio stations as a large chunk of their revenue comes from the messages they convey. Therefore, any radio station that wants to be ahead of its game would not joke with the kind of jingles it produces. Jingles become boring when sound aesthetic elements are lacking in them, and this is likely to negatively impact the attention the audience pays to them. Against this backdrop, this study analyses sound aesthetics in the jingles of two Nigerian radio stations – Jay FM 101.90 and Highland FM 101.50, both located in Jos, Plateau State, Nigeria. The general objective of the study was to examine whether these radio stations play jingles that carry sound aesthetic values that aid in satisfying audience's cravings for jingles that are attractive and pleasing to the human mind. The study was anchored on the Aesthetic Theory. Qualitative content analysis was employed as research design. The study utilised the purposive sampling technique with a sample size of eight jingles (four from each radio station). The study's findings indicate that entertainment and structure/continuity sound aesthetic elements were effectively used in the eight jingles selected for study but their application could still be improved. However, memorability sound aesthetics element was lacking in some of the jingles studied. The study therefore, recommended, inter alia, the inclusion of humour in jingles to enhance their entertainment element as well as the repetition of key lines plus inclusion of similar and familiar rhymes to boost the memorability of jingles.

Key words: Sound, Aesthetics, Radio, Jingles, Aesthetic Elements

1. Introduction

A lot of artworks, including jingles, paintings and written works carry some aesthetic elements in order to appeal to their targets. Ohaja (2023) defines aesthetics as the study, application and perception of beauty and taste in works of art, which include media products like books, films and music albums. Gottlieb (2007) explains that aesthetics is a branch of philosophy devoted to beauty and the arts. This implies that works of art should be beautified to attract attention and satisfy the sensory desires of those who are exposed to them.

Radio relies on sound for communication with its audience. Sound is a form of energy which is received by the sensation of hearing. Sound is associated with music, speech and poetry. Research has suggested that the reason music memory is better preserved than verbal memory is because unlike language, music is not located in one specific area of the brain but processed across many different parts (Smith et al., 2008). Consumers associate songs with emotions, people, and places they have experienced. Thus, music can activate memories and when memory is activated, the emotion associated with that memory is also evoked. This study examines the type of sound aesthetics deployed in the production of jingles for radio. Eight jingles were carefully selected for the study from two radio stations – Jay FM 101.90 and Highland FM 101.50. Jay FM 101.90 is a Jos-based private radio station which started operations in September 2016 with the aim of providing information, education and entertainment to the residents of Jos, Plateau State and its environs. It is located on Akila Machunga Street in Hwolshe area of Jos South Local Government Area (LGA). Highland FM 101.50 is also a Jos-based radio station but it is government-owned and an outlet of the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN). The station began operations in November 2009.

According to Kyanchat and Joseph (2023), jingles attract attention and carry an advertising theme alongside a message. This implies that advertisers employ jingles in order to draw the attention of customers to their products. They have been defined as identifiable musical or audio fragments which are associated with specific brand names to convey information or sell their products and services. Jingles are the perfect option for advertisers

who are desirous of interfacing with consumers (Sanders, 2021),

Today, jingles in the media are tried instruments that influence perceptions in many ways. Most prevalent in advertising, their effects have been examined only insufficiently. It is important to create unique and easily recognisable jingles to influence listeners. The role a jingle plays must be considered carefully because it creates attention, transports implicit and explicit messages, generates emotions and helps one retain information (Hung, 2001).

In Greek mythology, mariners had more to worry about than just the wind, waves, and other natural hazards of the sea. If they ventured too close to an island, they would hear the enchanting songs of sirens. Those who heard the melody were unable to resist, following it to their deaths as their boats crashed into the island's rocky shores (Siren: Greek mythology, 2024).

Although few would argue nowadays that jingles are strong enough to render listeners as helpless as the ill-fated Greek adventurers, studies show that jingles do have the power to sway people navigating the waters of today's media-saturated society (Allan, 2008; Bruner, 2000; North et al., 2004).

This research focuses attention on sound aesthetics and analyses jingles from two Nigerian radio stations to determine how well its key elements, namely entertainment, structure/continuity and memorability, are applied in them.

2. Statement of the Problem

Jingles are an integral part of radio broadcasting in Nigeria and the world at large. Most radio stations cannot run smoothly without advertisers' patronage with message placements through jingles. Jingles combine catchy phrases that are rhythmically arranged like poetry with sweet melodies that people often sing along with, thus enhancing memorability. What is not clear is the ability of Nigerian radio stations to churn out quality jingles that are of high aesthetic value to entertain, ensure there is continuity in the messaging about their subjects and aid memorability. This study assesses selected jingles of two Nigerian radio stations to examine the utilisation of sound aesthetics in their production.

3. Objectives of the Study

The overall aim of this study is to assess the sound aesthetics in some selected jingles from two Nigerian radio stations. The specific objectives are to:

1. Identify whether entertainment sound aesthetics element was used in the selected jingles from the two radio stations.
2. Determine if structure/continuity sound aesthetics element was used in the selected jingles from the two radio stations.
3. Ascertain if memorability sound aesthetics element was used in the selected jingles from the two radio stations.

4. Significance of the Study

Examining the sound aesthetics of jingles played on radio is significant because it will help the radio audience to recognise jingles with high-quality sound elements. It will also assist sound producers to appreciate the standard sound aesthetic elements they need to improve sound production. Advertisers' choices of radio stations can be influenced by the knowledge gained because of the comparative advantage offered by radio stations that apply high-quality sound aesthetics. The study will be of immense benefit to the broadcast industry as it would directly or indirectly improve its performance. It will also serve as a reference material for students of Media Aesthetics and others who want to conduct related studies.

5. Literature Review

5.1 Conceptual Review

5.1.1 Jingle

Jingles can be defined as "audio branding or sound logos, short audio clips associated with a brand to create an identity" (The Jingle Writer, 2024). A jingle is like a theme song because it creates brand recognition but is shorter, it may include lyrics or just instrumentation, it may seek to sell

products or simply convey information but it captures attention and sticks in the mind due to its catchiness, from the slogan to the rhythm of the music and/or message (How Music Influences Brand Identity, 2024).

Alexomanolaki et al. (2007) state that jingles may play several roles and have many effects: they may attract attention, carry the product message, act as a mnemonic device, and create excitement or a state of relaxation. Jingles can also create a lasting impact on listeners as they can linger in their minds for long (Shakil & Siddiqui, 2019). Jingles can, therefore, serve the overall promotional goals of a brand in one or more of the aforementioned capacities.

Ever since the first jingle was heard in 1926, jingles have become an important part of radio broadcasting (Stanley, 2016). With the increasing usage of television and radio as the means of communicating with the audience, music and jingles cannot be neglected.

The classic "jingle" is the most common musical technique for aiding memorability and hence a sharp recall of the wordings therein is probable if carefully and aesthetically packaged. A good jingle catches the audiences' attention and makes them think twice about a product. Good jingles in advertising can actually help to deliver a message better, help to persuade the consumers to purchase the product or service and even help to build brand recall and recognition. It is logical to assume that bad jingles can do the opposite.

5.1.2 Sound Aesthetics

Sounds are aural experiences people encounter on a daily basis. Some sounds are natural while others are man-made – they are produced. Sound aesthetics in this context refers to all audio sounds that are carefully produced such that they are pleasing to the ear and capable of providing entertainment.

Gottlieb (2007) states that audio in all its forms is a combination of aesthetics and technology. He maintains that an audio engineer without any sense of aesthetics can produce a sound successfully but cannot judge if the sound meets the expectations of the public. This implies that only persons who have the technical ability and knowledge of aesthetics can produce a sound that can be judged successful.

Sound aesthetics delves into the beauty and artistic qualities found in sounds. It focuses on elements such as pitch, timbre, rhythm and spatial qualities that affect emotional responses and interpretations. Bonet (2021) states that sound aesthetics is the sensory perception of sound, including choices that influence how sound is experienced. It encompasses attributes like pleasantness, loudness and clarity.

Cunningham et al. (2023) avers that sound aesthetics has attributes that shape human experiences across different contexts, including music, literature and language. Therefore, attention to sound aesthetics results in audio produced specifically with elements of beauty and entertainment to satisfy the cravings of the listener.

This study examines three key elements of sound aesthetics – entertainment, structure/continuity and memorability. They are borrowed from the works of David Huron, a professor at Ohio State University who specialises in music cognition and the psychology of music. They are among the six features of music which he pinpoints as serving the promotional goals of an advertisement – lyrical language, structure, authority establishment, entertainment, memorability and targeting (Cited in Music Ads and their Importance in Advertising, 2021). The three chosen were specifically identified in Huron (1989) as useful variables for evaluating jingles and music in general. They are central elements of sound aesthetics, which focuses on beauty and taste and may or may not further persuasion.

5.1.2.1 Entertainment Sound Aesthetics

Entertainment sound aesthetic showcases the ability of the producer of a jingle to produce sound and lyrics that are melodious and capable of taking the listener through a pleasurable experience. Entertainment sound aesthetics entails how sound design and auditory experiences contribute to the overall aesthetic value of entertainment forms. Entertainment sound aesthetics is achieved through the use of music and humour, among other pleasing sounds.

5.1.2.2 Structure/Continuity Sound Aesthetics

Structure/Continuity as a sound aesthetic element provides jingle producers the opportunity of blending sound, including lyrics (voice-over)

and instrumental music, to ensure that there is no break in transition. Structure/continuity value of sound elements in a jingle allows for seamless experience for the listener. It is critical in maintaining coherence in diegetic and non-diegetic aspects of a production throughout a sequence ensuring smooth transitions without interruptions and breaks (Masterclass, 2021).

5.1.2.3 Memorability Sound Aesthetics

Human beings have sensory cells that pick up information and are also able to process and store them. This happens when the information picked interests one. Ramsay et al. (2019) observe that our aural experiences play important roles in the memory of events in our lives. This is because the sounds we often come across during daily routines stay lodged in our minds more easily than others, just like music does. Memorability as a sound aesthetic element is thus enhanced by using music, (particularly in the form of catchy tunes), familiar terms and repetition.

5.2 Empirical Review

Nwadigo (2016) examined the extent to which jingles influence the retention and recall of advertisements on the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA). The study also sought to determine factors that facilitate recall and retention of advertisements on NTA other than jingles. The quantitative approach was adopted with survey as research design. Findings revealed that NTA most times used jingles in their television commercials and that jingles are effective in achieving audience retention and recall of advertisements on the network. The study recommended, inter alia, that jingles should be given serious attention because wrong use of background music can distort the message the advertiser wants and that jingles should incorporate some drama to enhance audience memorability.

Shakil & Siddiqui (2019) did a similar study in Karachi, Pakistan. Survey was used to elicit responses from the study participants. The result showed that people living in Karachi were influenced by jingles. It also found out that music in jingles have a significant and positive impact on product retention and recall. The study concluded that jingles in advertising are important and have great impact on consumers' buying behaviour. The study recommended that organisations should make products with good advertising strategy, including attractive and catchy jingles.

In their own study, Kyangchat & Joseph (2023) examined how radio jingles affect awareness/understanding of and adoption of a healthy diet among university students. The study applied survey research design. and found out that students of Mass Communication at Kaduna State University have been impacted positively and have adopted healthy eating habits through their exposure to jingles. The study recommended the integration of radio jingles in educational campaigns and collaboration with local radio stations to foster community engagement on healthy eating habits.

In view of the above reviews, it can be deduced that jingles are powerful and are capable of aiding retention, memorability and entertaining listeners/audience if well structured. The literature gap this study fills is to see how well jingles are produced in radio stations in terms of incorporating key sound aesthetics elements.

5.3 Theoretical Framework

The study is anchored on the Aesthetic Theory posthumously propounded by Theodor W. Adorno, a German philosopher, in 1970 (Adorno & Tiedemann, 1997). The theory focuses on the beauty of art. The tenets of Aesthetic Theory indicate that art is free and connects to society. This implies that although art can be creative and independent, it is like a mirror which reflects happenings around it.

Aesthetic Theory involves an interplay of music, lyrics and emotional response, which collectively influence social actions and consumer behaviour. Jingles function as a powerful medium for persuasion, utilising aesthetic elements like sound to drive engagements (Baer, 2016).

Aesthetic Theory contends that any work of art is made to entertain and sell and not to challenge (Adorno & Tiedemann, 1997). This postulation is apt and it resonates with the idea of sound aesthetics in the production of jingles for radio stations. Entertainment is one of the cardinal objectives of producing jingles in order to catch the attention of the listener. The main objective of advertising is to persuade listeners to buy the product being advertised. Without advertisement, consumers may be unaware of the existence of a product meant for sale. Overall, Aesthetic Theory relates to this

study as indicated in its tenets of entertainment and selling of products. This goes to say that jingles must be entertaining in order to attract listeners to buy products. This is done with carefully crafted words and captivating sound design. In this sense, jingles played on radio have aesthetic values aimed at entertaining listeners and at the same time motivating them to buy products or patronise services, although not all jingles are motivated to serve a the purpose of persuasion.

6. Research Methodology

The study employed qualitative content analysis using the descriptive design. Schreier (2012) describes qualitative content analysis as a process designed to condense raw data into categories or themes based on valid inference and interpretation using inductive reasoning, by which themes and categories emerge from the data through the researcher's careful examination and constant comparison.

Two radio stations (Jay FM 101.9, Jos and Highland FM 101.5, Jos) were purposively selected for the study based on their wide reach and coverage of the state capital and the state's 17 LGAs. Eight jingles were also purposively selected (four from each station) based on their consistent airplay at peak periods 6:30 a.m. – 7:00 a.m. in the mornings and 4:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. in the evenings monitored for a period of two separate weeks for each radio station. The qualitative content analysis design was helpful in categorising themes and describing the aesthetic elements of sound as observed in the selected radio stations' jingles.

The qualitative content analysis design is deemed most appropriate for this study as it recognises the subjective nature of the problem and will thematically present the findings in a way that directly reflects the sound aesthetics used in the selected jingles. Consequently, the jingles selected for the study were recorded and transcribed, after which the researchers listened to them repeatedly and identified the parts that fell under three common themes that were used in coding and summarising the sound aesthetics in line with the key elements of sound aesthetics in the study's objectives.

The variables that were employed as coding categories were: entertainment, structure/continuity and memorability. These three variables were considered useful as they were inspired by Huron (1989) who supports the idea of analysing jingles or any musical sound based on them. Jingle/music that is entertaining, has structure/continuity and memorability is deemed engaging and having the capacity to move people to act.

7. Data Presentation and Analysis

7.1 Jingles from Jay FM 101.9, Jos

Jingle No. 1 (The NMFA Jingle)

This jingle was for the sensitisation of the public on employment laws and procedures. It was sponsored by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (NMFA). The music accompanying the jingle in the background was in the classical music genre. The rhythm of the background music captivated the listener, who at that point was paying attention to the announcement, listening to it subconsciously. The aesthetic elements of entertainment and structure/continuity were carefully intertwined to beautify the jingle. Without the sound/music in the background, the verbal aspect of the jingle would be dull; it would appear bland like any other casual speech by anyone anywhere. However, the structure/continuity aesthetics element was not well positioned because at the middle of the jingle, transition was delayed a bit. Furthermore, memorability sound aesthetics element was absent in the jingle. This important aspect was neglected and the result was that the listener could not easily recall or remember the message.

Jingle No. 2 (NAN KID)

This jingle was an advertisement for children's cereal, NAN. The sound that accompanied the advertisement was mid-tempo music with the piano providing the melody, accompanied with other orchestral instruments. The sound was soft, which made it more relatable to the central message of the advertisement, which was a staple food for kids. The entertainment and structure/continuity aesthetics elements were experienced in the jingle by how well blended the instruments were with the verbal narration. The piano playing in the background provided some entertainment also which relaxed the mind. The only defect in the jingle was that memorability sound aesthetics was lacking. There was no repetition of key words that could stick in the mind

of the listener to help him/her remember the advertised product (NANKID).

Jingle No. 3 (Hamaz Communication)

Hamaz Communication is a tech house in the city of Jos. This advertisement was for the products it sells, such as smartphones and other electronic gadgets. The sound that accompanied the advertisement was an electronic pop song, which depicted the urban nature of the advertisement. The high-pace pulsating rhythm gave the sound an urban groove. The jingle drew its entertainment sound aesthetics from the background high-pitched song that was familiar among the mostly urban-based, young generation. The voice of the lady who did the voice-over was also fast and blended with the pop song, giving the jingle a smooth transition and thus bringing out its structure/continuity sound aesthetics element. However, the jingle lacked memorability. This is because there was no repetition of lines and some rhymes to help the audience recall and retain the advertisement. Words like 'Hamaz' and 'Tech giant' should have been repeated at least three times to facilitate audience recall and retention.

Jingle No. 4 (Peter Obi's Jingle)

Peter Obi contested for Nigeria's presidency in the 2023 General Elections on the Labour Party ticket. This jingle was produced to sell his candidacy and the lyrics in Pidgin English were intended to carry every listener along. The jingle was accompanied by a sound in the background which was in harmony with the chorus, "*Carry me dey go, Peter Obi carry me dey go for better Naija.*" This melody was copied from the popular gospel chorus, "*Carry me dey go, Jehovah carry me dey go, dey go dey go.*" This music resonated with the Christian folks who were the major supporters of the candidate. Entertainment, structure/continuity and memorability sound aesthetics were noticed in the jingle. From the song playing and the accompanying lyrics of "*carry me dey go,*" the listener was captivated by the blending of sound and lyrics in Pidgin English. The producers of the jingle ensured that there was no break in between, thereby ensuring that structure/continuity were maintained. The stanza '*Peter Obi carry me dey go for better Naija*' was repeated a number of times which gave it memorability.

7.2 Jingles from Highland FM 101.5, Jos

Jingle No. 1 (Wash Your Hands – Ministry of Health)

This jingle aimed to raise awareness among the general public about how to prevent diarrhea and cholera. It incorporated a popular nursery rhyme, "*This is the way we wash our hands,*" to guide mothers on how to properly clean their hands before feeding their children or after using the toilet. The sound in the background brought the entertainment sound aesthetic value and it also maintained structure/continuity. The repeated line, "*This is the way we wash our hands*" boosted memorability because the listener often recalled the melody and the message after hearing it a few times.

Jingle No. 2 (Dachung Musa Bagos)

This was a political jingle for Dachung Musa Bagos who sought election into the House of Representatives for Jos South and Jos East Federal Constituency. The music featured characteristics of Berom traditional music from Jos South. It used the fast-paced rhythm of the Berom ethnic group's traditional celebration songs. The Berom traditional sound was featured to entertain and to create an identity. The mixture of the traditional instruments and some modern instruments brought structure/continuity sound aesthetics values. The repetition of "*Dachung Musa Bagos, member na mu*" (Dachung Musa Bagos, our member) was deliberately laced over the jingle to enhance memorability.

Jingle No. 3 (NIMC)

This jingle was an advocacy sponsored by the National Identification Management Commission (NIMC). It came in the form of an announcement with music from a piano which breathed life and entertainment into the announcement. The music took a high pitch each time there was a transition to allow for its structure/continuity. The advocacy emphasised the fact that having an identity as a Nigerian is a legal right to access some privileges in the country. However, memorability sound aesthetics element was not incorporated in the jingle to aid in recall and retention.

Jingle No. 4 (MashMeal)

This jingle opened with a baby's gurgling sound which relates to the product (infant cereals) being advertised. A sound like clanging of a

metal gong of the Igbo tribe with a piano playing in the background was introduced just before the voice-over narration. Just like town criers in the Igbo traditional setting use the gong to alert the public to their announcements, the metal going served to grab listeners' attention for the message that followed. The message stated that it is good to introduce the child to “mashmeal” – a combination of most of the five food groups needed by babies after six months of exclusive breastfeeding. The continued clanging of the metal gong in lower decibels while the message was narrated entertained the listener. The voice-over combined with the sound ensured there was no break in the audio, thereby maintaining the structure/continuity of the jingle. The gurgling sound made by the baby reminded the listener at the end of the jingle about the need to feed the baby with “mashmeal.”

Nevertheless, the memorability of this jingle was low since the information was much but key parts were not sufficiently repeated and the lyrical arrangement did not rhyme or lend itself to catchiness.

8. Discussion of Findings

The goals of sound aesthetics in jingles are to attract the attention of the listeners, hold them bound to listen and create positive associations with the message given. Therefore, using sound aesthetics to deliver messages on political campaigns, product and service advertisements and public announcements, is meant to evoke appeal and provoke action on the part of listeners. The discussion below is based on the objectives raised for the study.

Objective One: Identify whether entertainment sound aesthetics element was used in the selected jingles from the two radio stations.

It was observed that all the eight jingles employed sound aesthetic value of entertainment but with different genres of music and types of sound. Some of the jingles were laced with hip-hop, mid-tempo, high-pace pulsating rhythms and gospel-like sounds while jingle No. 3 from Highland FM 101.5 embraced the Berom traditional sound from Jos South LGA of Plateau State. With these mixed genres of music, the entertainment aesthetics element was met. This is consistent with Kenwright (2020)'s assertion that the entertainment value of sound enhances engagement and emotional impact and stimulates imagination, making it a crucial component in creating immersive interactive experiences.

Objective Two: Determine if structure/continuity sound aesthetics element was used in the selected jingles from the two radio stations.

Structure/continuity sound aesthetics element was noticed in seven of the jingles under study except the one sponsored by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (NMFA) on employment laws. This indicates that verbal and non-verbal sounds like voice-over, product appeal and melody were all blended to ensure that structure/continuity was maintained. The mixture of music and voice-over featured prominently in the jingles. For instance, jingle No. 1 on Jay FM 101.9 and jingles No. 1 and 4 on Highland FM 101.5 were produced to sensitise the public on employment laws, the need for cleanliness among nursing mothers so that their babies will be free from diseases like diarrhea and cholera and the importance of registering to obtain a national identity number from the NIMC. The three jingles had background music and voice-over which ensured there was a good structure/continuity.

Objective Three: Ascertain if memorability sound aesthetics element was used in the selected jingles from the two radio stations.

Listeners/consumers tend to patronise products which elicit some degree of familiarity. This is because parts of a jingle sticks in their minds and is recalled when making a choice of products. This is the memorability sound aesthetic value and it was used especially in jingle No. 2 from Jay FM 101.9 and jingles No. 1 and 3 from Highland FM 101.5. The three jingles demonstrated memorability elements by embedding repetitive lines such as, “*This is the way we wash our hands, wash our hands, wash our hands,*” from a popular nursery rhyme, “*Carry me dey go, Peter Obi carry me dey go for better Naija*” and “*Sabon member mu, Dachung Musa Bagos*” (Our new House of Representative member, Dachung Musa Bagos), so that the listener became used to the lines. This memorability sound aesthetics value enables the listener to recognise a product. Ramsay et al. (2019) avers that features such as harmonicity and familiarity are strong indicators of memorability, suggesting that sounds that are familiar, and have positive valence are more likely to be remembered. However, the other jingles did not employ the memorability sound aesthetics in the delivery of the messages and in the background sound. This could reduce the success of the jingles as nothing may be memorised to enable patronage.

9. Conclusion

Although sound aesthetics has been a critical component of radio production for decades, it often remains unclear just how much a certain piece of sound or music used in a radio jingle can influence the overall narrative by affecting the moods and attitudes of the listeners. While it is impossible to make sweeping generalisations of effective use of sound aesthetics in radio production by Nigerian radio stations on the basis of the selected jingles analysed, the eight jingles selected for the study enabled the making of observations and deductions that can be tested in further research pertaining to sound aesthetics in radio production in Nigeria, especially studies with a quantitative research approach. Nonetheless, what remains clear from the findings of this study is that entertainment and structure/continuity sound aesthetics elements are currently better applied than the memorability element but there is still room for improvement in the harnessing of these elements for the production of first-rate radio jingles.

10. Recommendations

From the findings of this study, the following recommendations are hereby made:

1. Radio stations should broaden the entertainment element in their jingles by incorporating humour, rather than relying on music and rhymes predominantly as humorous devices like jokes elicit laughter and leave listeners with a warm feeling which can be transferred to the product, personality or service the message is about.
2. Producers of jingles should endeavour to blend verbal and non-verbal sounds in a manner that is pleasing in order to maintain structure/continuity because once there is a break in transition, the message intended will be interrupted.
3. Repetition of lines and inclusion of similar and familiar rhymes should feature prominently in the production of jingles to aid memorability as it was noticed that most of the jingles in the two radio stations did not use the memorability sound aesthetic efficiently.

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