AUDIO BRANDING AND LINGUISTIC IDENTITY OF UKRAINIAN RADIO STATIONS IN THE DIGITAL MEDIA SPACE

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Ukrainian radio in the 2020s exists within a hybrid ecosystem: terrestrial frequencies coexist with streaming platforms, mobile applications, podcast aggregators, and video-centric social networks, where audio is consumed fragmentarily, through headphones, and "on the go". Under these conditions, radio station branding is increasingly less confined to a recognizable jingle or slogan; instead, it is transforming into a system for managing listener attention, trust, and content consumption habits. Simultaneously, linguistic identity (the choice of language code, normativity/variability, hosting style, and community markers) is becoming an element not only of cultural policy but also of competitive differentiation.

The purpose of this study is to conduct a comprehensive theoretical and applied analysis of radio broadcaster identification tools in the modern media space. This is achieved through a sequential series of research tasks: from outlining the structural components of audio branding for Ukrainian radio stations in the digital environment to identifying the mechanisms for integrating linguistic identity into the overall sonic model of broadcasting. Particular emphasis is placed on the development and substantiation of an applied communicative audit model based on the "sound + language" vector. Grounded in a system of measurable linguistic and acoustic indicators, this model is designed to serve as an effective tool for redesigning the brand strategies of domestic media entities as they adapt to the latest challenges of digital communication.

It is appropriate to consider the concept of audio branding in media as the managed construction of stable acoustic brand markers (sound logos, jingles, beds, sweeps, branded noise-floor, and signature tempo-rhythm) in combination with the "brand voice" (voice signature: timbre, diction, intonational patterns, pausing). Together, these elements ensure instantaneous recognition and emotional attachment from the audience. In the digital media space, brand sound becomes modular: it must be adapted to various durations and platforms (6–10 seconds for short-form, 20–30 seconds for pre-rolls, 2–4 seconds for sound logos, and longer beds for live broadcasts) while preserving the core identification nucleus.

At the same time, linguistic identity for radio is not merely the language the host speaks, but a complex set of decisions: literary language norms, acceptable colloquialisms, professional jargon/anglicisms, address etiquette, genre models of interaction, rhetorical figures, policies regarding surzhyk (mixed language), quoting, and the consistency of tone between the airwaves and digital channels (podcast descriptions, headlines, and social media announcements). Given this, in brand management practice, it is logical to establish a unified "linguistic-stylistic profile" for the station, which is synchronized with its sound design.

Modern digitalization is radically transforming the architecture of the "entry point" to a media brand, where the listener's primary contact with a radio station increasingly occurs outside the traditional FM band–through algorithmic app recommendations, viral social media clips, or discrete podcast segments. In such an environment, audio identity must implement a "first touch" strategy, ensuring instantaneous brand identification within a minimal timeframe [3].

At the same time, the transition to digital audio requires the implementation of new content verification protocols. To objectively evaluate the effectiveness of sonic solutions and linguistic strategies, server logs, deduplication, and rigorous filtering of bot traffic in accordance with international guidelines (notably the IAB Tech Lab Podcast Measurement Guidelines v2.2) are becoming the standard [5]. This shift enables a move from ephemeral reach to a transparent determination of actual downloads and listens.

A critically important aspect in this context is the distinction between the concepts of "audio contact" and "audio attention". In an environment of media multitasking, the IAB/MRC cross-industry approach offers a framework for aligning attention measurement methods through the integration of data signals, tracking, and panel surveys. Adapting this toolkit to analyze linguistic identity allows for more than just recording the fact of listening; it enables the assessment of cognitive engagement of the audience, which is a key performance indicator for the successful redesign of a modern radio brand [4].

Based on the practices of Ukrainian radio broadcasting and digital formats (podcast versions of programs, special projects, live streams), three levels of interaction between sound and language can be identified:

– phonetic-prosodic: tempo, melody, pausing, stress, and emotional management; the alignment of the announcer's delivery style with the station's musical package [1].

– lexical-stylistic: the balance between normativity and colloquialism; community markers; the management of borrowings (especially in technological and musical formats) without loss of clarity.

– discursive: repetitive communicative scenarios (greetings, intros, interactive segments, service messages) that form the station's "familiar sound" and reinforce recognizability [4].

It is critically important that linguistic patterns do not conflict with the sonic image: for instance, "premium" sound design combined with an infantilized or overly familiar manner of speech creates a dissonance that, in a digital environment, quickly converts into unsubscribes and short listening durations [2].

The scientific novelty of the study is represented through the development and substantiation of an applied audit model for "audio-verbal identity", designed to evaluate the integrity of a radio station's audio branding and linguistic identity within a convergent digital environment. The proposed model is systemic in nature and is based on five interdependent functional blocks. The first level of the audit involves analyzing the brand core, where the correlation between the mission, values, and positioning of the media brand is determined alongside a list of mandatory audio and linguistic markers. This allows for the verification of strategic alignment between sound, content, and the selected target audiences.

The second block of the model focuses on the radio station's sound package, encompassing the audit of sound logos, jingles, and transients. A critical condition here is ensuring technological integrity, which entails uniform rules for volume and frequency balance across FM broadcasting, streaming services, and podcasts. Simultaneously, an analysis of the "brand voice" is conducted, evaluating the profiles of announcers and hosts based on parameters of diction, timbre, and intonational patterns. This stage also includes the development of scripts for key genres and the formation of a branded vocabulary that clearly distinguishes between recommended and undesirable linguistic formulas [6].

Special attention within the model is paid to platform adaptation mechanisms, which involve creating differentiated versions of identity for short-form video, specialized audio platforms, and mobile notifications. A mandatory element is the synchronization of metadata – specifically episode titles and content descriptions – with the overall stylistic tone of the broadcast. The final stage of the audit covers the measurement and optimization block, which integrates consumption metrics, advertising load analysis, A/B testing methods for sonic solutions, and panel surveys. Such an approach, aligned with international attention measurement standards, enables an effective redesign of the radio station's brand strategy based on verified

quantitative and qualitative indicators. The operational result of the audit should be an "identity passport" (Brand Sound & Language Book): a 10–15 page document of rules, examples, and templates that can be scaled across the entire content chain.

Based on an analysis of current trends and media market challenges, the following practical recommendations are proposed for Ukrainian radio stations for the 2023–2026 period, aimed at strengthening their competitiveness in the digital environment. First and foremost, it is essential to ensure the technological unification of the sound logo and jingles across various distribution channels. This involves creating separate master copies of audio materials for FM broadcasting and digital platforms (streaming, podcasts) to avoid undesirable fluctuations in volume and frequency characteristics, thereby ensuring a comfortable listening experience regardless of the playback device.

A vital step in forming a resilient identity is the implementation of a linguistic-stylistic guide that clearly regulates the tone of communication, the etiquette of address, rules for using anglicisms, and the pronunciation of brand names or songs. Establishing a mandatory dictionary of fixed formulas for service blocks will help maintain a recognizable "brand voice" even when hosts change. At the same time, operating within the "attention economy" requires a restructuring of content: shortening lengthy introductions in podcast versions, clearly marking segments, and optimizing advertising load. Empirical data suggests that the total number of advertisements per hour has a more significant impact on audience churn than the specific architecture of the ad breaks themselves.

To build long-term trust among partners and the audience, it is advisable for radio stations to transition to transparent analytics by implementing standardized approaches to traffic counting and filtering in accordance with the IAB Tech Lab (v2.2) protocols. This ensures the verification of actual consumption metrics and provides protection against bot activity. Furthermore, the complete synchronization of on-air language and digital communications is critically important. Episode descriptions, podcast titles, and social media activity must adhere to a single stylistic tone, allowing the brand to sound cohesive across all touchpoints with the listener.

The audio branding of Ukrainian radio stations in the digital media space should be interpreted as an integrated system of sonic and linguistic solutions that ensure recognition and manage audience attention and trust across various platforms. The proposed "audio-verbal identity" audit model enables the transformation of sound and language policy redesign from intuitive decisions into a managed process with measurable indicators and transparent analytical standards. The practical value of this approach lies in its suitability for the rapid update of identity (jingles/sound

logos/scripts) without compromising the cultural mission of the Ukrainian language, while simultaneously accounting for the real behavior of the digital audience.

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JĘZYK I KULTURA UKRAIŃSKA WE WSPÓŁCZESNEJ HUMANITARNEJ PRZESTRZENI CZASOWEJ: ASPEKTY KOMUNIKACJI MIĘDZYJĘZYKOWEJ I KSZTAŁTOWANIE KOMPETENCJI KOMUNIKACYJNYCH WSPÓŁCZESNEGO SPECJALISTY

Zbiór materiałów z Międzynarodowej Konferencji Naukowo-Praktycznej online
Ku pamięci filologa, dziennikarza i obrońcy Ukrainy Wołodymyra Mukana
(20 lutego 2026 roku)

УКРАЇНСЬКА МОВА ТА КУЛЬТУРА В СУЧАСНОМУ ГУМАНІТАРНОМУ ЧАСОПРОСТОРІ: АСПЕКТИ МІЖМОВНОЇ КОМУНІКАЦІЇ ТА ФОРМУВАННЯ КОМУНІКАТИВНОЇ КОМПЕТЕНТНОСТІ СУЧАСНОГО ФАХІВЦЯ

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