In this study, influences of vehicle exterior images on sound quality ratings of acceleration sounds were investigated. Luxury and sporty vehicle images were presented to German or Japanese frequent drivers, while listening to acceleration sounds. Subsequently, loudness, luxury, and sportiness of the sounds were rated. The results indicate that the German drivers tended to rate loudness lower and luxury higher when the sounds were presented with images of luxury cars, compared to images of sporty vehicles. As expected, sportiness was rated higher when an image of a sporty vehicle was presented. Oppositely the Japanese drivers indicated higher loudness and lower luxury when the sounds were combined with luxury vehicle images. Further, comparable to the German drivers, they rated higher sportiness when presented with sporty vehicle images. Consequently, it appears that sound quality ratings can be affected by the vehicle exterior design, but the average tendencies suggest different effect directions for German vs. Japanese drivers.
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