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Title: Sound labels for classifying environment-friendly products – progress and challenges

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Abstract:

People are permanently exposed to noise caused by numerous products. The environmental awareness increases, the harmful effect of noise on humans is well acknowledged, and at the same the desire for acoustic comfort rises. Thus, different emission-related labels are introduced as a reference for consumers informing about relevant product emissions. In fact, surveys show that product sound is already one of the top product features regarding the purchase decision. Thus, it seems that fewer emissions of everyday products are beneficial for all – consumers as well as manufacturers, and finally public health. However, most of the current sound labels use only simple noise level indicators and are only optional leading to an insignificant impact on purchase decisions and reducing the benefit of acoustically-friendly products on our acoustic environment. Moreover, several existing sound labels consider only simple minimum specifications and neglect sound quality related aspects at all.

The paper provides an overview of the current status of sound labeling focusing on the European market. Moreover, case studies are presented illustrating massive differences in the sound quality of products on the market within the same product category. The limitations of current sound labeling approaches and initiatives are discussed in detail.

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