



Music, Psychology & Behavior

Over the past 40 years there have been a number of academic studies into the effects of background music in a retail environment. The research indicates that music volume, speed and genre can have significant effects on how long consumers spend in shops and restaurants, how much they purchase or consume, and whether they view brands or individual products favorably or unfavorably.

Whilst most academic studies tend to focus on a single aspect of music influencing behavior, there are some general conclusions that can be drawn from comparing a number of different studies.

General Conclusions

The various studies tend to indicate the following general conclusions hold merit:

- Music volume influences both perceived shopping time and actual shopping time.
- Music genre can also influence perceived shopping time.
- Music tempo can directly affect time shoppers spend in a store.
- Music genre can directly influence purchasing decisions within a store.
- Music has a profound effect on brand and product perception.

Music Volume Influence On Perceived & Actual Time Spent In Stores

Music volume has been shown to have a negative correlation with shopping time. If customers consider background music to be too loud they are likely to spend less time in your store. Interestingly, studies in grocery stores have shown that this does not adversely influence the amount of purchases despite less time being spent in the store. This indicates that it could be used to increase customer throughput without reducing spend.

Music that is too quiet is also negatively perceived so it is clear that appropriate use of music volume (and possibly the ability to vary it) is important.

Music Genre Influence On Perceived & Actual Time Spent In Stores

Research has also found that the music genre selection can also have a profound effect on perceived time spent shopping. Studies show that 'top 40' music played in stores with patrons predominantly over the age of 25 resulted in most customers believing they had spent more time in the store than they actually had.

Similarly, results indicate that an 'easy listening' format played to customers predominantly under 25 produced the same results with their perceived shopping time exceeding the actual time.

If we accept that it is desirable to minimise discrepancies between perceived and actual shopping times then it is clear that the correct music selection is vital for appealing to a target demographic.

Music Tempo Can Directly Affect Time Shoppers Spend In A Store

Experiments conducted in the 80's showed that both supermarkets (Milliman, 1982) and restaurants (Milliman, 1986) experienced slower traffic flow when slower background music was played. In both cases this resulted in high consumer spends which is not that surprising (at least for supermarkets), given more time to see items they wanted to purchase. In the case of restaurants, the increased spend was seen to come from great drink sales, again this is not really that surprising as they are not likely to eat an extra meal!

Studies have shown that classical music may be particularly effective in triggering increased spending but only for brands and products where it is appropriate.

Music Genre Can Directly Influence Purchasing Decisions Within A Store

Several studies have demonstrated a relationship between music genre and purchasing decisions. One study conducted in the 1990's demonstrated that a wine store that played classical music saw an increase in the overall customer spend when compared with periods of pop music. Interestingly, neither time in store or volume of sales increased indicating that the classical music influenced the consumers to purchase more expensive wine.

Music Has A Profound Effect On Brand & Product Perception

Not surprisingly, studies have shown that people are more likely to desire products advertised in conjunction with music they find appealing when compared with music they don't like or no music at all (Mitchell, 1988; Simpkins & Smith).

Numerous studies have shown that consumers are more likely to purchase products when the music associated with them is aligned with the product. These effects work for both individual products and for brands (Oakes, 2007).

By associating your brand with music that connects with your target demographic, you can establish a positive relationship between your brand and your customers.

Further Reading

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- Oakes, S. (2007). "Evaluating Empirical Research into Music in Advertising: A Congruity Perspective." *Journal of Advertising Research*, 47(1), 38-50.
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- Smith, P., & Cumow, R. (1966). "'Arousal Hypothesis' and the Effects of Music on Purchasing Behavior." *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 50(3), 255-256.
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Extracts From Relevant Academic Papers

[EXTRACT] - THE POWER OF MUSIC AND ITS INFLUENCE ON INTERNATIONAL RETAIL BRANDS AND SHOPPER BEHAVIOUR: A MULTI CASE STUDY APPROACH

Music can be a critical component of store atmosphere and plays a role in purchase decision making process (Areni and Kim, 1993; Donovan and Rossiter, 1982; Smith and Curnow, 1966). A personalised music strategy can support a retail brand and makes a powerful connection with specific target markets by incorporating customer demographics (such as age, gender mix and income levels) and psychographics (such as preferences, lifestyles, personality and attitudes). By understanding the demographics and psychographics of its target market, retailers can create an audio environment where their customers feel comfortable, relaxed and happy to spend time and money. The use of carefully selected music creates an immediate distinction for a retail brand by establishing the right mood. Music can motivate the subconscious and create a first and lasting impression.

Michael Morrison - Monash University

Full Report: <http://www.scribd.com/doc/5557494/Music-influence-on-buyers>

[Extract] The Effects of Music in a Retail Setting on Real & Perceived Shopping Times

The results of this study support the belief that shopping time is affected by a retail environmental factor like store music. Individuals who had a choice as to the duration of their shopping experience shopped longer when listening to less familiar music compared to more familiar music. This

difference appeared attributable to differences in emotional responses to the two types of music. Individuals reported being more aroused while listening to the unfamiliar music compared to the familiar music. Once the effect of arousal on shopping times was considered, other reactions to music familiarity (either measured or unmeasured) did not have an effect on actual shopping times.

University Of Washington – Business School

Full Report: <http://faculty.bschool.washington.edu/ryalch/Research/atmosphe.htm>

[Extract] - THE INFLUENCE OF BACKGROUND MUSIC ON SHOPPING BEHAVIOR: CLASSICAL VERSUS TOP-FORTY MUSIC IN A WINE STORE

As part of a field experiment in a large U.S. city, the background music (classical versus Top-Forty) in a centrally located wine store was varied over a two month period. The results of an ANOVA indicated that the classical music influenced shoppers to spend more money. Additional findings suggest that, rather than increasing the amount of wine purchased, customers selected more expensive merchandise when classical music was played in the background. MacInnis and Park's (1991) notion that music is more persuasive when it "fits" the persuasion context is employed to account for these results.

Charles S. Areni, Texas Tech University

David Kim, Texas Tech University

Full Report: <http://www.acrwebsite.org/search/view-conference-proceedings.aspx?Id=7467>