

The Sound of Sales

The right music can contribute to enhanced customer satisfaction and increased restaurant sales says business music expert.

When international restaurant survey company, Zagat asked consumers what irritates them most when dining out, noise came in second only to bad service. The research poll confirmed a disturbing trend: restaurants don't care about audio ambience as much as they should.

But it's one of the top reasons why people are leaving restaurants. Zagat Survey® offers guides to dining for more than 70 major markets, as well as guides for hotels, resorts and spas worldwide, family travel, entertaining, shopping, nightlife, movies, music, theatre and golf.

Restaurants are typically noisy operations and often significant investments are made in décor which creates a bespoke look and feel for the hospitality brand, and unseen and discreet sound absorbers which reduce noise pollution and undesirable sound. However too often consumers appear to be eating in restaurants where the music is like an over-seasoned plate.

"Sound needs to be appropriate to the brand, to the desired environment and needs to work for the restaurant to motivate consumer behaviour in order to meet specific business goals," says Craig Cesman, CEO of DMX (www.dmx.co.za). "The restaurant public is notoriously fickle while the business is amongst the most fiercely contested. This makes it crucial for restaurateurs to pay keen attention to detail and to create an on brand home-away-from-home for customers," he says.

According to Statistics SA the local food and beverages industry generated R6.2 billion in the first quarter of this year; however, this market come under threat as the hospitality industry feels the heat of a dramatic price rise in high food prices and the cost of rental space. "Fast food and restaurant retailers have never

been under this much pressure to perform, and it is now becoming increasingly crucial for them to pay attention to those factors that can influence consumer spending patterns and behaviour," says Cesman.

The head DMX South Africa, Cesman believes that the right approach to sound can increase customer sales by keeping customers happy, turning tables faster or recreating restaurants as havens where people want to spend more and more time. "Music affects mood and mood affects behaviour.

An intelligent approach to sound can help fast food outlets turn tables faster or create a luxurious ambience in other leisure settings where business owners want diners to relax and spend more time, knowing they will spend more money," explains Cesman.

Research shows that music has a powerful impact on business environments and can be used to influence consumer behaviour, improve staff service and increase the amount of time that consumers spend in business environments by strongly influencing the experience they have.

"Our experience is backed up by research which shows the wrong music and loud, obtrusive sound makes customers leave restaurants while the right music directly affects sales," says Cesman "and in industries where competitors are vying for every inch of market share the news that they can influence customer behaviour with sound should be music to business owner's ears."