

## Music, Memory and Retail Marketing

*Music helps marketers create rich brand driven experiences within the retail environment, creating strong brand recall and heightening the consumer-brand connection says Craig Cesman, Chief Executive of DMX Music Africa.*

The retail industry is incredibly competitive with companies vying for customers, to increase market share and enhance brand loyalty. Many retailers operate in heavily traded niche markets yet need to ensure that products and services resonate with their customers for repeat purchase and to create strong brand loyalty. Leading retailers and brand marketers are now beginning to understand the relationship between the right music, branding and the in-store experience.

In short how to turn an ordinary retail encounter into a memorable event that promotes the retailer's brand while creating a place where consumers want to spend more time. Locally @home has enjoyed huge success by focussing on the consumer experience and using the right music to create memorable customer experiences. This is borne out by the positive feedback they receive from customers, and a rapid growth in market share.

"We have found, through the feedback that our customers offer us, that they experience the music as uplifting," explains @home's Bruce Procter, Marketing and Operations Executive. "We get consistent compliments from customers. The huge popularity is because the music we play makes the shopping environment very relaxed and pleasurable. Some customers actually start singing along to familiar tracks and the music just seems to relax, soothe and break any tension customers may feel when they walk into our stores.

The music has added tremendous value to the shopping experience," says Procter. Shopping is a sensory experience and research shows that there is a direct link between a store's atmosphere and its financial performance. A recent study by Leo J. Shapiro and Associates shows that shoppers respond to atmospheric elements both consciously and unconsciously. This study shows the extent of the connection between "store atmospherics" and the store's performance. The research indicates a majority of consumers (63.3%) recall being influenced by a store's atmosphere to buy more or spend more time in a store.

The statistics further reveal that customers of all ages are receptive to atmospheric influences. Higher-income shoppers, women and consumers who shop more frequently are also more likely to say they remember being influenced than, respectively, mid-to-low-income shoppers, men and those who make 0-2 trips to the store each week.

The choice of music in a retail setting has serious consequences in the mind of the consumer in both positive and negative ways. Almost 20% say music has encouraged them to spend more time in a store; this result increases to 27% for shoppers between the ages of 21-39. The wrong music can have the wrong results. More than 40% say music has encouraged them to leave the store altogether.

Clearly this shows that the right music is as important to the overall shopping experience as lighting, product placement and promotion, in store branding, the in-store ambience as well as the attitude of and professionalism of sales people. Retailers like Abercrombie & Fitch, Nike, H&M, Guess and Body Shop have come to understand the relationship between consumers and their sensory experiences, as well as the ability to create a personal connection with customers through music.

Because music and memory are so intimately intertwined, music can create an ambience where customers feel they belong, and create a loyal brand connection. And because of music's ability for recall and to create strong emotional and visual imagery, music can help create a tangible expression of a unique brand.

That is why in commercial environments, smart retail leaders are integrating consumer lifestyle behaviour with the goals and strategies of businesses to build memorable brands. Through audio branding these retailers achieve this while entertaining customers, motivating staff and creating extraordinary commercial environments.