

Shop of the Pops

Want to hear the latest hits and be exposed to the latest trends and sounds? Turn off the radio and head to the store, because more and more retailers are tuning into original sounds and creating sound tracks especially for their stores.

Retailers are now turning to experts to mix unique sound tracks for their stores with the right music and for youth brands that is cutting edge music which represents the brand's unique and individual style. Called 'audio branding' it's all about taking a research driven approach to finding music that appeals to your consumer target market, creates a bespoke shopping experience that speaks to the store's brand essence. Internationally this approach is used by the world's top retailers like H&M, Nike and Abercrombie & Fitch. Locally the trend is being pioneered in South Africa by DMX Music for brand leaders like Woolworths and @home.

From a youth culture perspective the approach is so successful that the latest dance music tracks are being released in store and young customers flock to these points of purchase to be exposed to the latest trends in sounds. This obviously creates a situation where the youth brand is revitalised, becomes hip and creates strong customer identification and loyalty to the brand while creating more reasons for customers to come back to stores.

For local brands like Woolworths and @home who have more mature customer sets, the goal is creating a back track that fits their customer segments from a geographic, demographic and time perspective. "Music is strongly cognitive and research shows that it has a powerful impact on business environments. Music can be used to enhance brand recall, augment brand loyalty, increase the amount of time that consumers spend in store, and strongly influence the experience they have.

More importantly music can influence consumer behaviour, improve staff service and attract new customers to stores, Craig Cesman, says, chief executive officer of DMX Music in South Africa. "Research shows that music can increase gross retail sales by close on forty percent (1), while nine out of ten managers

say that music directly creates a positive and motivated work environment (2)."

"When we work with retailers and major players in the leisure industry we look at identifying their musical DNA so that we don't just create a soundtrack, but mix the right type of music to suit their brand and to create the right aural experience for the people who enjoy spending time in store," says Cesman. "Internationally in-store music has evolved into a science and if you walk into Abercrombie & Fitch which is a strong youth brand you'll hear the latest dance music tracks before they air on radio, creating a hot, rebellious a youthfully fast-paced feel for the trendy brand. Obviously locally, for Virgin Active, music makes workouts more enjoyable, but not just any music, the right music," says Cesman.

"When DMX works with innovative brands it is crucial that the music reflects the soul of the brand," he adds. "What's interesting to note is that because of the millions of people that traffic leading stores every year our programming of music can help promote artists through exposure in the stores alone. Particularly for youth brands where people come into the store because they get to know that they can hear the latest hits first. Internationally DMX programmers are constantly picking out and playing future hits long before they reach the radio. However, the 'musical DNA' of a particular store must be unique to stay ahead of competitors so the programming for our stores is highly confidential, much to the dismay of curious shoppers."

In South Africa this market is being pioneered by DMX. "The local market is at the beginning of the growth curve of audio branding, but marketing sophisticates like Woolworths and @home, now realize the value of the right music in store," says Cesman. For more than

35 years, DMX Music has been an industry leader in the development and engineering of Audio Branding and key to the company's success is a research-based understanding of the relationship between consumers and their sensory experiences, as well as the ability to create a personal connection with customers through music.

In commercial environments these insights into consumer lifestyle behaviour are integrated with the goals and strategies of businesses to build memorable brands, entertain customers, motivate staff and create extraordinary commercial environments through Audio Branding. DMX's customers represent top global industries and brand leaders like: Abercrombie & Fitch, Nike, H&M and Guess. Some local clients include: @home, Virgin Active, Southern Sun, Primi Piatti and Dros.

DMX has one of the world's largest digital music libraries, delivering more than 500 styles of non-stop music to brand leaders, top retailers and the world's top stores across the world.

- (1) Journal of Marketing
- (2) Gallup Organization