

The Right Sound Helps Create Retail Experiences Customers Love

Survey proves the role of music in creating sales, retail brand loyalty and customer retention particularly during key seasonal sales opportunities such as Valentine's Day.

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South Africa is a nation of music lovers with popularity of music being proven by increased sales and reality television programmes such as 'Pop Idol' and 'X-factor' attracting millions of viewers. This conveys a strong message to local retailers who have neglected to embrace the power of music in marketing. Music can convey anything that brand owners or marketers need it to. This is because music is emotionally charged and because as humans we all have music we love or hate, which makes us laugh or cry or transports us through memory to experiences rich with emotion.

Because of the strong relationship between music, memory and emotions, music can influence and change human behaviour. Marketers are now realising that music can be soothing, healing, relaxing, energizing. That it can do more than help create a strong brand, that in itself it is a powerful tool that can help sell anything from beers to bakkies or bread.

The opportunity that music presents to the retail sector is significant, because retailers need to create an environment that does more than attracts and retains customers. Retailers need to create a consistent brand experience that creates customer enjoyment while promoting sales. With advertising inflation and consumer saturation of marketing eroding the efficacy of branding, in-store music has become a powerful marketing tool to help influence and change buyer behaviour at the point of purchase.

The power of music is heightened during key seasonal sales periods, particularly at Valentines Day, when a growth in consumer sophistication and scepticism of advertising methods means that retailers need to work harder to create value for customers.

That the right choice of music significantly impacts sales is not anecdotal. Music can have a significant impact on sales as evidenced in a study conducted by London's Vision One Research, in collaboration with DMX Music, an industry leader in the development and engineering of Audio Branding. DMX's customers represent top global industries and retail brand leaders like: Abercrombie & Fitch, Nike, H&M and Guess

The research done by DMX Music and Vision On Research took three months and focused on the impact of music on the shopping experience and specifically on sales, in a leading women's fashion retailer.

The research showed that when the "right" music was played in stores it had a significant impact on purchase behaviour patterns, and increased sales between 12 and 18 percent. The "right" music means that a research-based methodology is used in understanding the relationship between consumers and their sensory experiences, as well as the ability to create a personal connection with customers through music. If this methodology is not used, the research showed that sales are decreased when the "wrong" music is played in store. The wrong music being a soundtrack which doesn't have understanding of the consumer demographics, the brand experience sought to be created or the ambience that customers are looking for in a store.

"Music offers retailers a means of boosting sales during peak seasonal sales period such as Valentine's Day, but it is crucial that a sophisticated, research-based methodology be applied to ensure that the music is turning customer on to sales and not off," says Craig Cesman, CEO of DMX Music Africa. "As markets

become increasingly advertising saturated, stores will present a key opportunity to unlock sales. The retailers that will win will be those who understand that branding in store is a multi-sensory experience, and that they should be paying as much attention to the stores sound as they do to customer service or the look and feel of a store.”