

Impact of Music on Consumer Behaviour: A Perspective on retail atmospheric

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to examine the influence of music on consumer behaviour and explore whether there is a relationship between consumer behaviour and music in the context of retailing. The paper is based on the review of studies, empirical and conceptual, examining a large number of music-interrelated variables and their impact on different dimensions of consumer behaviour. The studies report that music influences consumption experience at cognitive, emotional, and behavioural levels, particularly with regard to attitudes and perceptions, time and money spend, and moods and feelings, in retail experience. The influence of music is moderated by customer and store profiles, purchase timings, and other ambience factors. The study provides significant insights into critical issues related to influence of music, for future research. The research answered many important questions for designing musical environment in the retail stores to influence shopping experience and consumer responses. Based on a critical review of important studies, the present paper proposes a framework to understand the effect of music on consumption experience in retail stores.

Keywords: Music, Consumption, Consumer behaviour, Retailing

1.0 INTRODUCTION

There is a saying in Indian sub-continent's culture that "Music is the food for Human Soul". The idea that atmospheric (tangible and intangible elements in the environment) including music can influence consumer behaviour was first coined by Philip Kotler (1974). Atmospheric illustrates the concept of conscious designing of internal and external environment of the store. It consists of element like size, shape, layout, facilities, freshness, softness, temperature etc. Gordan (1996) narrated that atmospherics are the means by which a consumption environment engenders emotional reactions in customers, encouraging them to stay in the setting, surf, evaluate and purchase; or, discouraging any of these activities. Berman and Evans (1995) divide atmospheric stimuli into four categories namely the exterior of the store, the general interior, the layout and design variables, and the point-of-purchase and decoration variables.

Retail patronage intentions have been found to be more highly correlated with consumers' beliefs about physical attractiveness of retail service environments than with merchandise quality, general price level, selection, and six other store/product beliefs (Greg. et al., 2008). Turley and Milliman (2000) conceptualized atmospheric variables as stimuli leading to some cognitive affect within the individual that, in turn, leads to some behavioral response. Several researchers have indeed reported links between atmospherics and retail patronage or patronage intentions. Mehrabian and Russell (1974) argued that atmospheric cues may impact consumer behavioral response, which sets the landmark for following research on impact of environment-store related cues on shopper behaviour.

Some atmospheric factors are more easily controlled by marketers than others. Music is one factor that is usually highly controllable, ranging from loud to soft, fast to slow, vocal to instrumental, heavy metal to hit-oriented rock, or classical to contemporary urban. Cherng & Chien (2011) narrates that music is an invisible language that stimulates emotions and internal feelings and, therefore, buyer shopping behavior can be influenced by background music. Greg. et al., (2006) found that music and its various elements can arouse and express feeling like happiness or sadness. In the review of sixty published studies on atmospherics, Turley and Milliman (2000) found that "The most commonly studied internal atmospheric cue by researcher is Music". The crucial impact of music on purchase intention and atmosphere is evident from this fact.

Yalch and Spangenberg (1993, p. 632) narrated that "music is a particularly attractive atmospheric variable because it is relatively inexpensive to provide, is easily changed, and is thought to have predictable appeals to individuals based on their ages and lifestyles". Wakefield and Baker (1998) argued that when music is combined with interest of shopper it may add to consumer pleasure. However, Hume et. al (2003) did not find any link between music and behavioral response in context of wine purchase. By and large many researchers Dowling and Harwood, 1986; Yalch and Spangenberg, 1990; Babin and Darden, 1996; Kellaris and Kent, 1993; Rong-Fuh et al., 2009; Gianfranco et al., (2011) have supported background music can influence the shopper behavioral response in retail environment. Retailers have to select the appropriate music according to the type of target market. As claimed by Morrison and Beverland (2003) that outcome of music may be negative when there is no synchronization between music and store type. Jean-Charles (2001) narrated that retailers improving cognitive activity must do it with great care since it is not the solution and it is found that higher cognitive action is lined with lower attitudes.

The fact that music can greatly influence the consumer behaviour in retail has been recognized and acknowledged. It is commercially significant to marketers and is of increasing interest to consumer researchers. Nevertheless, a clear picture of how music affects consumers has yet to emerge. Several inconsistent or perplexing music-related findings can be found in the research literature. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to explore the relationship between a vital atmospheric variable, music, and consumer behaviour. For this purpose an extensive review of the past literature was done. This investigation allows for a more thorough and realistic examination of music's effects than many previous studies provide. Another purpose is to examine the role of music in shaping overall consumer behaviour.

Music has a significant potential to act as stimulus in the retail environment. Music has been used for many reasons in the store like noticing, recognition, involvement, and remembrance in retail environment. Morrison and Beverland (2003) consider music to be an important variable in creating in-store experiences and connecting with customers' emotions while North and Hargreaves (1998) believe the role of music in consumer research is of considerable theoretical interest as well. Undeniably, music occupies a place of importance in the lives of consumers.

It has been extensively acknowledged that background music can influence consumer behaviour (Bitner, 1992). Music can be an influential stimulus to shape the consumer retail experience. The importance of music in shaping overall retail experience has been proved in a number of studies. Music is one of the crucial ambient factors in retail environment which holds, rejuvenates, pep up, involves, and creates gratifying and unforgettable experience for consumer. As narrated by Herrington and Capella (1994) that background music may have a direct impact on shopper experience by impacting the needs, servicescape evaluations, cognitive and effective evaluations. Many studies have reported that background music is one of the key atmospheric variable and affects shopper behaviour.

There is a significant amount of attention from researcher and industry practitioners for exploring the impact of music variables on retail shopper experience. This would help them to come up with more effective and efficient ways to delight the customer instead of

satisfied. Extensive review of past literature has shows that both empirical and conceptual studies have been done to find out the influence of background music on consumer behaviour. Kristina and Ulf (2006) found that as market demands an increased experience-orientation, as competition increases and consumers are more focused on emotional sides of shopping today. Bruner (1990) argued that music can be strong emotional stimulus capable of inducing effective and behavioral consumer responses.

A survey done by the Gallup Organization found that 91 percent of retail shoppers surveyed agreed that music had an influence on their shopping outcome. From the same poll is was also discovered that 86 percent of these customers said music added to the atmosphere of a store, while music influenced the purchase decisions of 33 percent of respondents. Promising result like this about background music potential to positively influence the retail shopping experience further support the main idea.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

As narrated by Bruner's (1990) that music has the potential to be an effective and efficient means for arousing moods, emotional responses and communicating without words. Research has shown that consumer's responses to advertising and to retail environments can also be influence by music. These responses will result in emotional states, attitude toward the advertisement and the product, buying intention and consumer behaviour (Dube et al., 1995).

Herrington and Capella (1996) investigated in their study that up to what extent the dimension of music, i.e. the degree to which the shopper likes or dislikes background music. After examining the impact of music on consumer behaviour on a sample of 89 retail store shoppers, they reported that music has a positive relationship with the amount of time and money spent spend in the retail store. (Jean-Charles, 2001) stated that background music is a tool for increasing sales and enhancing positive attitudes toward the store.

Service business like retailing, where consumption occurs in the factory, consumers are highly sensitive towards the dimensions of atmosphere like music to like or dislike (Bitner, 1992). Mahrabiand and Russell (1974) claimed that consumers avoid unpleasant and approach pleasant environments.

2.1 Characteristics of the Music

Music is commonly defined as the art of organized sound, the purpose of which is to elicit an aesthetic response in listeners (Apel, 1973). Musical sound is multidimensional in nature. Time, pitch, and texture are the three major dimensions of musical sound (Bruner, 1990). There are mainly two properties of music's namely, energy level (i.e., determined by tempo, brevity of sound, etc.) and the degree of the sound's novelty (Radoy and David Boyle, 1997).

Time related music variables may include tempo, meter, rhythm, and duration. Textural music variables include timbre and orchestration. Pitch-related music variables include tonality, melody, and harmony. The sound is organized around these variables and serves as raw material of the music.

Tempo, the tempo or pace of music, is perhaps the most basic component of music's temporal dimension (Duerr, 1981). Tonality refers to the arrangement of time between pitches in a scale (Apel, 1973). Stout et al. (1990) argued in their study that tonality to have the maximum impact of any musical variable observed in a study of 40 television advertisements. The third dimension of music, texture, is comprised of timbre and orchestration (Bruner, 1990). Timbre (also referred to as tone color) is defined by Dowling and Harwood (1986) as "the differences of sound quality among various musical instruments".

By and large fast music is recognized as more stimulating and slow music as more relaxing. Music pitched in major keys tends to be perceived as happier than music pitched in minor modalities. These basic characterizations are fairly common within Western culture and are also up to some level, shared across cultures (Wallace (1991). Rong-Fuh et al., (2009) examined the differential effect of music tempo on distractor perspective and the arousal inducer perspective. It was found that, with the same length of decision time, participants made more accurate decisions under the faster tempo music condition than under the slower. It was also found that there was an interactive effect of music tempo and task difficulty on decision accuracy. These findings provide support for the view that faster tempo music tends to be an arousal inducer rather than a distractor. Spangenberg et al. (2005) found that pleasing scents trigger approach behaviors but do not find a direct link among music and levels of arousal and pleasure. However, Kellaris and Kent (1993) find a link between music tempo and arousal. Therefore, findings on these topics are not conclusive.

Gianfranco et al. (2011) found that favorable perceptions of in-store music influence arousal and pleasure positively. However, influence of in-store music influence on store satisfaction was not found. Retailers use music and scents (aroma) to which consumers are positively inclined, often unconsciously, to create a pleasing environment and positive mood favorable to customer satisfaction (Spangenberg et al., 2005). Babin and Darden (1996) argued that customer favorable opinion of in-store music and aroma should be linked with positive mood, which may result in greater store satisfaction.

Jean-Charles (2001) found that background music is a tool for increasing sales and enhancing positive attitudes toward the store. When the consumers' involvement in the product is low or when the salespersons' arguments are weak, music stimulates cognitive activity. If the effectiveness of sales encounter is low the cognitive activity will be stimulated by cues other than those related to the service encounter. If the sales pitch is persuasive, background music may facilitate consumers in enhancing their attention to the salesperson. The arousing effects of music and its fit with the salesperson's sales pitch were examined by Jean-Charles (2001). They argued that music tempo enhances brain alpha waves, which in turn, stimulates cognitive activity. The deeper the cognitive response, the greater the impact of music on attitudes. When music does not fit with the situation, the impression of dissonance makes the salesperson and his/her arguments all the worse.

Many researchers have examined the impact of music on advertisement effectiveness (Kellaeris et al., 1993; Zhu and Meyers-Levy, 2005; Joan and Rui, 2010). Kellaeris et al. (1993) found that when music fits well in the advertisement, concentration to music improves cognitive stimulation (for example brand recall or recognition) on the other hand, when the fit is low, attention to music reduces the cognitive stimulation. The impact of music on advertisement may vary between males and female. As Joan and Rui (2010) revealed that the meaning(s) of music that consumers perceive and use when evaluating the advertised product can depend on both consumers' gender. Music is very frequently used environmental variable used by marketers to match with the visuals to produce better advertising effectiveness (Gorn et al., 1991).

Gender is another shopper characteristic that is likely to influence the meaning different people extort from music. Joan and Rui (2010) found that males and females differ in their processing proclivity. Meyers-Levy 1989 reported that males process and respond selectively to a more circumscribed array of data. In contrast, females prefer to process and respond comprehensively to a wide spectrum of data in their environment, including details or subtle cues. Females normally report responses that reveal higher sensitivity to and deeper apprehension of harder to extract data (Sengupta and Dahl, 2008). Furthermore, when connection level is constant, males employ single cue, whereas, females are more likely to process and base their responses on numerous pieces of data (Meyers-Levy, 1989). These finding indicate that males and female differ in their response to background music.

2.2 Happy or sad music

Greg (2008) found that happy/sad music has a significant direct effect on shopping intentions, while the direct effect of liked/disliked music was marginally significant. Although playing happy music significantly increased subject's intention to shop, shopping intentions were highest when music was liked moreover. It means that mixing happy music that is liked by store' customers are more impactful than either happy music or liked music alone. It has been observed that some retailers underestimate the crucial importance of background music in shaping overall retail experience. Thoughtful consideration of music variables may yield unexpected positive consumer response.

Gardner (1985) proposed in their study that, positive (cheerful) music should lead to positive moods which should ultimately results in positive evaluations and behaviors. Yalch and Spangenberg (1993) have narrated that store opinion can partly explained by the type music effects, happy or sad music. The consumers tend to spend more money when particular types of music were played. These findings further strengthen the idea that music can influence consumer shopping behaviour. As claimed by Baker et al., (1992) that there is statistically significant relationship between ambient and social factors in retail environment, however, the specific impact of sad/happy music on consumer was not examined. They suggested in their study that retailers should explore the aspect of music like loudness, tempo, or liking/disliking of specific music. They tested the effective component of the music in their study which was relevant to store environment.

James and Robert (1994) examined the effects of three important objective stimulus properties of music (tempo, tonality, texture) on pleasure and arousal. They found that Pleasure was influenced by the interactions of both tempo and tonality with texture. Faster speeds and more consonant keys increased the pleasantness of classical (but not pop) music. Arousal was influenced by the interaction of tempo with texture. Faster speeds produced greater arousal among subjects exposed to pop (but not classical) music. Feelings of surprise were influenced by tonality such that less consonant keys (i.e., atonal relative to minor, minor relative to major) were rated as more surprising.

Laurette and Sylvie (2001) found that background music pleasure-intensity may influence store evaluation by mere affect transfer, and the direct link between pleasure intensity and the store evaluation is non-significant. At the same time pleasure intensity positively influenced the consumers' attitude towards the servicescape. They also examined the relationship between pleasure intensity and attitude towards the sales personnel but didn't found any significant association between them.

Anna and Jochen (2001) narrated that shopping experience can be improved by adding more favorable environmental cues by the shopper. The results of their study showed that when the arousal levels of ambient scent and background music matched, consumers' evaluations of the shopping experience were enhanced. When a stimuli in retail environment act collectively to provide a consistent atmosphere, the shopper in the environment will react more positively. One of the guiding principles in designing servicescape is the connection and consistency in environmental design (Shostack, 1987).

Areni and Kim (1993), claimed in their study that customer tend to buy more expensive merchandise when classical music is played. MacInnis and Park's (1991) found that this music fit in a persuasion situation is the reason of certain shopper behaviour. These findings are further supported by a study done by Shen and Chen (2006).

Blair and Shimp (1992) have concluded a positive relationship between disliked music and negative opinion about the brand. Gorn (1982) found that brand preference may increase while listening to liked music as compare to disliked music. As many researcher have investigated the impact of music on consumer behaviour in retail environment, Thorgaard et al., (2005) investigated the pleasing/unpleasing" effects of music on patients satisfaction and stay in Denmark postanaesthesia care unit service and found a significant positive association among two.

2.3 Impact of music on E-retailing

Internet marketing is one of the areas which are highly competitive and it is hard for marketers to gain advantage on the basis of price. Therefore, innovation is an important strategy to gain competitive advantages. Online market is different from physical environment in that consumers search for product information and expose to less number of environmental cues for making purchase decisions. Background music is one of the significant means of creating a pleasing environment (Cherng & Chien, 2011). From the customer perspective, there is more risk in online shopping compared to traditional shopping because, of the distance among buyers and sellers, no actual contact with sales person and cannot see the physical product (Yoon, 2002). In this scenario trust becomes as one of the vital factor in creating, developing and maintaining successful customer relationships in online retailing (Morgan and Hunt 1994; Mukherjee and Nath, 2007). A lack of trust has been frequently acknowledged as one of the main barriers to e-commerce (Wang and Emurian, 2005).

The impact of environmental cues on consumer behaviour in internet shopping is mediated by emotional states of the consumer (Koo and Ju, 2010). In online shopping the environment is even more crucial in terms of consumer response as there are no sales people to assist the customer. Cherng & Chien (2011) found that background music creates a high-arousal environment in online retailing to enhance pleasure and purchase intention respectively, but it is hedonic products only. Background cannot influence the purchase intention of utilitarian products rather it may actually hinder the evaluation of product information. Lian and Lin (2008) found that the relationship between consumer characteristics and attitude towards online shopping is moderated by product cost, purchase frequency, and value proposition.

3.0 CONCLUSION

Review of related research has shown that playing either happy or liked music alone can increase shopping in stores. Therefore, retailers should take care to play happy music that is liked by their target markets in order to achieve the greatest positive effect of music on patronage behavior toward retail service environments. Perhaps some marketers consider music as a comparatively simple and easy construct when, as demonstrated by these results, careful consideration of the interaction of music's dimensions may yield the maximum positive effects on customers' behaviors. Greg et al., (2008) reported in their finding that whether music was happy or sad did influence people's liking for the music. Despite the fact that playing happy music considerably increased subjects' intentions to shop in the stimulus store, shopping intentions were greatest when the music was liked as well. As music element does influence retail patronage intentions (Greg. et al., 2008).

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