

Jiaqi Zhou
Benedict M Lim
Music 26
16-Jun-20

How does Music Stimulate Purchasing Decision?

This paper examined how consumers would make their purchasing decisions with the background music playing in the consuming place, like shopping malls and restaurants, and music in the mass media and in the movies. This paper also studied what kind of music is usually played effectively to affect the customers' positive behavior under different circumstances. There is music everywhere around our lives, and it makes our lives rich and colorful. In *Roy Morgan Research's* survey "For entertainment purposes, who's playing music, games and videos on their smartphones?", among 70% Smartphone owners in Australia, 47% of them choose music as one of the entertainment activities, while Generation Z (people born in 1991-2005) and Generation Y (people born in 1976-1990) rank music for entertainment over games and videos. Beside the entertaining purpose, music can also be served as self-expression, communication, aesthetic enjoyment and many other aspects in our daily life, but have you noticed that music can also be used as commercial promotion? Customers might overlook the effect of background music, but management knows how music works out to help them add colors to their products. Brands like McDonald's, Statefarm, Intel etc. have higher sales volume under the influence of the jingles or audio logos in the advertisement. As I have noticed that many retail stores, restaurants, salons and other consuming place play music, comparing to some places where are quiet without music, they have higher in-store traffic flow. Besides, music used in TV commercials and films also have significant effects that attracts audiences to buy products connected to the advertisement or films because "music style (e.g., easy listening, jazz, fanfare/march) and mnemonic devices (e.g., theme songs, jingle) to account for musical elements that could potentially contribute to

consumer affect and recall of the content of advertisements” (Shevy and Hung 316). As for music itself, the tempo, rhythm, melody, volume etc. have significantly aroused customers’ emotion when they are making purchasing decision, and researches by Daniel J. Levitin have shown the deep connection between music and the brain. Therefore, the value of music not only is for appreciation, but also is used by marketers to promote sales through capturing customers’ emotion, psychological stimuli, and recognition and so on.

The methodology here is to analyze researches to examine the function of musical elements, and the goal is to see if music is persuasive in consumption. To figure out whether music has the magic to stimulate purchasing decision under different conditions, we need to test some assumptions and determine whether to accept or reject them:

ASSUMPTION 1: Fitting music has positive effect on consumption.

TEST 1: Is it important for background music to fit in the environment with the attempt for higher sales. If yes, then the assumption is valid; otherwise, it is not supported.

ASSUMPTION 2: Fast-tempo music makes customers want to consumer more in the restaurants.

TEST 2: Does fast-tempo music affects customers’ behavior in restaurants? If yes, then the assumption is valid; otherwise, it is not supported.

ASSUMPTION 3: Soundtrack and movie have complementary relation.

TEST 3: Does music related to a successful movie can attract more consumption on soundtracks? If yes, then the assumption is valid; otherwise, then it is not supported.

ASSUMPTION 4: Music makes a brand more recognizable.

TEST 4: Does music within the television commercial can increase brand cognition and thus attract more consumers? If yes, then the assumption is valid; otherwise, then it is not supported.

ASSUMPTION 5: Familiarity of music increase brand preference.

TEST 5: Can we prove that customers choose to buy a product depend on how familiar they are with the music that is related to the product? If yes, then the assumption is valid; otherwise, then it is not supported.

Given that musical elements are useful in affecting customers' purchasing decision, let's look at how music play a role under different kinds of circumstances.

People have their own preference on music genre, from *Statista* research "Music album sales in the United States from 2008 to 2014, by genre (in millions)," even though the sales of all kinds of music genre are sinking from every year, rock has been ranked the No.1 favorite music, followed by alternative, R&B, metal and other music genre, in the U.S. However, does rock music can be used in consuming place to influence consumption? In order to find out whether people's favorite music or fitting music can influence their purchasing decision, we need to divide different musical genres by their similar traits. In the book *Why You Love Music*, author John Powell introduces that music can be grouped into four different categories:

- Reflective and complex music (classical, jazz, folk, and blues)
- Intense and rebellious music (rock, alternative, and heavy metal)
- Upbeat and conventional music (pop, sound tracks, religious, and country)
- Energetic and rhythmic music (rap, soul, and electronic)

It seems that a large proportion of people are fans of intense and rebellious music because 85.25% of music album sales was rock music in 2014 ("Music album sales in the United States

from 2008 to 2014, by genre (in millions),”however, do the types of music most people prefer can be influential when it comes to purchasing decision? John Powell says that the right type of background music played in the appropriate situation can affect customers’ behavior. Powell refers to Professor Adrian North and David Hargreaves’s investigation on the influence of music on French wine and German wine selection, which shows that when a supermarket plays a song in French, “the French bottles sold five times as fast as the German ones.” And when they play German music, “the German wine sold twice as fast as the French stuff” (John 12-13). In Charles Areni and David Kim’s research on how people react to classical and Top-Forty music in the wine store, they point out that classical music better influences customers to spend more money on wine because “wine purchasing, tasting and consumption are associated with higher socio-economic status, prestige, sophistication, and complexity” (Areni and Kim 336), and as a reflective and complex music, classical music fits in these contexts. Hence, background music doesn’t need to conform what most people like (e.g. rock music as discuss above) because the most popular musical genre—rock has loud and distorted sound, which is not appropriate to play in the public. But background music that fits in the consuming place can promote the environment and attract more customers.

Tempo of background music can impact the atmosphere of a place, thus changing customers’ behavior. Tempo is how fast or how slow of the music, and it’s just like foot tapping, “if you tap your foot or snap your fingers in time to a piece of music, the tempo of the piece will be directly related to how fast or slow you are tapping” (Levitin 59). In Ronald Milliman’s research “The Influence of Background Music on the Behavior of Restaurant Patrons,” he concludes that in the restaurant, slow-tempo background music makes customers spend more time at table and their expenditures are higher than fast-tempo background music is played. Also,

“the slower [the music], perhaps more soothing background music created a more relaxing environment (greater approach condition)” (Milliman 288). As for Ronald Milliman’s research on the influence of background music on restaurant, people spend more time on their meal when they are treated with slow tempo music, while people treated with fast tempo music finish their dinner quicker. Also, he says that “The slower tempo background music encouraged customers to drink an average of 3.04 drinks more per customer group.” Even though the difference in data in both treatment is not extremely large, it’s good enough to see people are willing to stay longer in the restaurant and spend more on their meals as the background music playing in slow pace. In Ronald Milliman’s another research in a supermarket, he focuses on background music that can impact customers’ behavior and thus influence daily gross sales volume, which “The sales volumes were higher consistently associated with the slower tempo musical selections while in contrast, the lower sales figures were consistently associated with the faster tempo music...” (Milliman 90). Therefore, fast-tempo music doesn’t work really well to keep restaurant customers, but slow tempo music can keep in-store traffic flow as customers’ behavior follow the rhythm of the music. The assumption of the effect of fast-tempo music in the restaurants is not supported.

Beside the function of tempo of background music in consumption, a good soundtrack can reflect its content and influence audiences’ emotions when they are watching movies. A successful movie cannot stand alone without the support of music, while the popular movie attracts more audiences to buy the album at the same time. Before 1920s, most of films were silent, and audiences predicted the plots by watching actors’ body languages. While playing the silent movies, there were often asserted with piano playing or orchestral music on the scene to stimulate audiences’ emotion effectively. With the development of film industries and the

technological advancement, silent film was replaced by sound film, and *The Jazz Singer* in 1927 became a milestone for movie with synchronized sound. There are a lot of best-selling movie soundtracks along with the successful movies, such as “My Heart Will Go On” in *Titanic* (1997), “Let It Go” in *Frozen* (2013), “See You Again” in *Furious 7* (2015) etc. However, music can not only improve the quality of a movie but also increase the quantity of music sales. For example, according to *Box Office Mojo*, one of the most classic films *Titanic* had 2.187 billion dollar box office, ranking the second in the world. At the same time, its soundtrack “My Heart Will Go On” was as successful as *Titanic*. As *USA TODAY* reports, “the pop tune (‘My Heart Will Go On’) was the world's best-selling single of 1998, has sold more than 15 million copies since, won four Grammy Awards, won an Oscar for best original song and ranks No. 14 on the American Film Institute's list of the 100 greatest movie songs.” In 2015 *Furious 7* received over 1.516 billion dollar box office and its soundtrack “See You Again” were well known around the world and reached the peak in music charts. As a tribute to one of the actors Paul Walker, who died in 2013, the song “See You Again” made *Furious 7* more touching, and audiences can't help but shed tears at the end of the movie. Therefore, when a movie is touching or successful, background music plays a big part in the movie's success, and many people will unconsciously download the soundtracks. The assumption for the complementary relation between music and movie is supported.

Not only a successful film music increases the quality of the film, the quantity of tickets and the soundtracks, but also a successful video game music gives players a better experience and increase the consumption of videogame soundtracks. The purchasing of videogames and their soundtrack is interconnected because “40% of [hard-core gamers] said that a game introduced them to a new band or song, then 27% of them went out and bought what they heard”

(Hong). The sound effects in a game that associate with the players' action can evoke their emotion and make them more engaged in the game world. Also, videogame sound can be a cue for the players. Mark Grimshaw, Sui-lan Tan, and Scott Lipscomb state, "whether playing as part of a team or as an individual fighting alone, the player must be attentive to sounds cueing the presence of friend or foe and to sounds marking the effects of their actions" (Mark, Tan, and Lipscomb 293). A successful videogame music can attract videogame players to consume the original soundtracks outside of the game. There are many formats that they can access to the music, such as downloading, purchasing CDs, file sharing. Even though people consume game music, some illegal downloads and free file sharing actually decrease the expenditure of CDs. Research by The Recording Industry Association of America shows that "In 2002 and 2003, years in which Napster-like services continued to grow in popularity, computer owners' mean CD expenditures decreased by \$4.79 and \$5.55 (11% and 14%), respectively" (Michel 5). The growing of Internet piracy results in the decrease of CDs consumption even though there are high number of audiences.

Next, music or jingles play an important role in making brands more outstanding and recognizable. Jingles are also a type of audio logos because they allow consumers to recognize the brands just as visual logos, and successful jingles or audio logos can attract more customers. For instance, brand's jingle like McDonald's, Statefarm, Intel, Green Giant etc. either include their name of the brand or have a special rhythm that can be recalled. Most of the successful jingles are in cheerful and exciting sounds. In Lara O'Reilly's research "The 10 most effective brand jingles — From the Intel chimes to 'I'm Lovin' it'," the NO.1 performing brand is Nationwide Insurance, whose "audio logo really stands out, however, in 2 key areas: Unaided Recall and Engagement score. It had the top Unaided Recall score among the audio logos tested, by a

significant margin.” Consumers can easily identify Nationwide by its catchy rhythm and the notable brand name. For other brands like Farmer’s Insurance, Intel, Green Giant also score high in the outstanding audio logo list, and their common ground is the exciting rhythm, which evokes the feeling of happiness and engagement. In a 1979 McDonald’s TV advertisement “Nobody can do it like McDonald’s can,” showed that everybody liked McDonald’s because it was the best place and it provided three meals for people conveniently. Throughout this ad, the “Nobody can do it” jingle created brand recognition and even brand preference.

Ranking No. 6 on Lara O'Reilly’s survey, McDonald’s “The ‘I’m Lovin’ It’ campaign evokes great Excitement, and also has great Unaided Recall. Like many of the audio logos on this list, the sound has evolved somewhat over the years but its current iteration evokes a great deal of Excitement.” In recent years’ McDonald’s commercials, the jingle “Ba Da Ba Ba Bah, I’m lovin’ it” become familiar to everyone especially to kids. When the catchy advertising jingle rings, people can easily identify McDonald’s. McDonald’s has become one of the largest fast food chains in the world. According to *Statista* “revenue of McDonald’s worldwide from 2005 to 2015,” “over the last nine fiscal years, McDonald’s revenue achieved its peak in 2013 at 28.11 billion U.S. dollars.” Also, “McDonald’s was founded in California in the United States in 1940 and, by 2014, had 36,525 restaurants worldwide, 14,259 of which were in the U.S. The company serves an average of 70 million customers worldwide every day.” As we can see, McDonald’s success and its advertising jingle are inseparable. Consequently, statistics supports the music or jingle has positive effect on brand cognition and helps to boost sales.

In the book *This Is Your Brain on Music*, author Daniel J. Levitin demonstrates that the cerebellum of our brain is responsible to deal with motor activity, emotions, cognition and so on. When people listen to music, the cerebellum can response whether they like the music or not and

whether they are familiar with the music (Levitin 174-175). He also introduces Harvard professor Jeremy Schmahmann's study on people's brain. Levitin says that "he notes that the cerebellum contains massive connections to emotional centers of the brain—the amygdala, which is involved in remembering emotional events, and the frontal lobe, the part of the brain involved in planning and impulse control" (Levitin 175). Consequently, there is a deep connection between the brain and music as the cerebellum helps to understand and identify the music that people listen to.

When people hear a song, the familiarity of the background music is important because our brain will identify the song quickly and we may be humming with the song. Hyun Hee Park, Jai Kwan Park and Jung Ok Jeon introduce Ali and Peynircioglu's study that "the familiarity of a musical stimulus increases the audience's 'liking', or 'preference', for the stimulus. They demonstrated that familiarity increases the intensity of emotional responses to music, but that this happens only when the stimulus is made highly familiar not through interspersed repetitions but through repetitions en masse" (Park and Jeon 769). They discuss music in two different situations—high- involvement and low-involvement, while high-involvement purchase is the product is expensive or at high risk and low-involvement purchase is the product is not expensive or at low risk if a mistake is made. They conclude that the familiarity of music serves better in the low-involvement situations because "consumers focus more on the credibility, attractiveness and prestige of the source in the advertisement (Park and Jeon 780)." In other words, music in the advertisement can help improve the image of a product and attract consumers for a product that poses a low risk even if the consumers make mistakes. But for the high-involvement purchase, product fit of background music works better as consumers focus more on the physical information and direct response of a product. The familiarity of background

music works better on products with less value, while customers focus more on products' information when the products are valuable.

In conclusion, music is a powerful tool to stimulate customers' purchasing decision. Background music is an important tool for management to attract more consumers and boost sales and increase revenues. However, what kind of music to be played depends on the context, and it's important for background music to fit in the environment. Like we discuss, if a store wants to increase French/German wine sales, French/German music is helpful. Also, customers are more sensitive to classical music in the wine store. In the restaurants, slow-tempo music works better to keep in-store traffic flow than fast-tempo music because slow-tempo music slows down the speed of dining. As for the consumption of movies, a fitting and successful soundtracks contribute not only to higher sales of the movies, but also to more purchase or download of the soundtracks. On the other hand, as more accessible music in the market, illegal downloads and free file sharing decrease the sales of music even though the click rates are high. A successful TV commercial cannot stand alone without the help of background music or jingle because the catchy rhythm or notable name in the jingle directly influence audiences' emotion and recognition. Similar to the recognizable jingles, familiarity of the background music can also increase brand preference but only under low-involvement situation. Therefore, there is no such type of music that can be applied in all circumstances, but management can choose a fitting music for their products according to the context. However, it's possible for music not appear in the consuming places or TV commercials but companies can still achieve their high product sales?

Cited Sources

- “For entertainment purposes: who’s playing music, games and videos on their smartphones?” *Roy Morgan Research*. 03 Aug 2015.
- “Music album sales in the United States from 2008 to 2014, by genre (in millions).” *Statista*, StatistaInc. n.d.
- “Revenue of McDonald's Corporation worldwide from 2005 to 2015 (in billion U.S. dollars).” *Statista*. StatistaInc. n.d. 20 July 2016.
- Alpert, Judy I., and Mark I. Alpert. "Background Music As An Influence In Consumer Mood And Advertising Responses." *Advances In Consumer Research* 16.1 (1989): 485-491. Business Source Complete. 13 Feb. 2017.
- Areni, Charles S. and David Kim. "The Influence of Background Music on Shopping Behavior: Classical Versus Top-Forty Music in a Wine Store." *Advances in Consumer Research*, Jan. 1993, p. 336-340.
- Daltrozzo, Jérôme, et al. "Temporal Aspects of the Feeling of Familiarity for Music and the Emergence of Conceptual Processing." *Journal of Cognitive Neuroscience*, Aug. 2010, p. 1754-1769.
- Grimshaw, Mark, Siu-Lan Tan, and Scott D. Lipscomb. “Playing with sound: The role of music and sound effects in gaming.” *The Psychology of Music in Multimedia*. Oxford University Press, 2013, p. 289-314.
- Hong, Ben Beom. “Catching Up with Video Games.” *Music Business Journal*. Dec. 2010.
- Hyun Hee, Park, Park Jai Kwan, and Jeon Jung Ok. "Attributes Of Background Music And Consumed Responses To TV Commercials." *International Journal Of Advertising* 33.4 (2014): 767-784. Business Source Complete. 13 Feb. 2017.
- Kaemmer, John E. *Music in Human Life*. University of Texas Press, Austin, 1993.
- Koelsch, Stefan. *Brain and Music*. Wiley-Blackwell. 2012.
- Levitin, Daniel J. *This is your brain on music*. Dutton Penguin. 2006.
- Michel, Norbert J. “The Impact of Digital File Sharing on the Music Industry: An Empirical Analysis.” *The Berkeley Electronic Press*. 2006.
- Milliman, Ronald E. "The Influence of Background Music on the Behavior of Restaurant Patrons." *Journal of Consumer Research*, Sept. 1986, p. 286-289.
- Milliman, Ronald E. "Using Background Music to Affect the Behavior of Supermarket Shoppers." *Journal of Marketing*, Summer 1982, p. 86-91.
- O'Reilly, Lara. “The 10 most effective brand jingles — From the Intel chimes to 'I'm Lovin' it'.” *Business Insider*. Nov. 20, 2016.
- Powell, John. *Why You Love Music*. Little, Brown And Company. 2016.
- Puccinelli, Nancy M., et al. "Should I Stay or Should I Go? Mood Congruity, Self-Monitoring and Retail Context Preference." *Advances in Consumer Research*, Jan. 2008, p.829-830.
- Schwarz, Norbert and Gerald L. Clore. "Mood, Misattribution, and Judgments of Well-Being: Informative and Directive Functions of Affective States." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Sept. 1983, p. 513-523.
- Seashore, Carl E. *Psychology of Music*. Dover Publications. 1967.
- Shevy, Mark and Kineta Hung. “Music in television advertising and other persuasive media.” *The Psychology of Music in Multimedia*. Oxford University Press, 2013, p. 316-338.
- Truitt, Brian. “My Heart Will Go On' grew as big as 'Titanic' itself.” *USA TODAY*, 9 April 2012,

Zhu, Rui (Juliet), and Joan Meyers-Levy. "Distinguishing Between The Meanings Of Music: When Background Music Affects Product Perceptions." *Journal of Marketing Research (JMR)* 42.3 (2005): 333-345. Business Source Complete, 13 Feb. 2017.