

THE 5-MINUTE GUIDE TO HOW CONSUMERS PROCESS BACKGROUND MUSIC



Overview



As consumers, we're under the influence of background music the moment we walk through the doors of our favorite businesses. We know that when holiday songs are pumped into department stores, we tend to drop more dollars during December. Or that when a spa turns on the ambient sounds of pan flutes and pebble fountains, it lulls us into a Zen-like state that's so relaxing we return to relive the experience again and again.

While overhead music has long triggered desired consumer behavior, few companies have truly harnessed its full power to shape their encounters with each and every one of their customers. From easing the wait during the dinner rush to increasing sales during slow times, the right playlists can turn shoppers into buyers and first-time guests into your best brand ambassadors. But it takes more than just turning on your favorite tunes—it requires fully integrating music into your experiential marketing campaign.

To drive traffic and boost your profits, there's no better time than now to take your music from background to center stage of the customer experience.

In this guidebook, we'll go over exactly why background music can have such a profound impact on your customers.



How Consumers Process Music

From mixtapes in the 80s to the personal streaming radio playlists of today, people curate what they listen to based on certain attributes. Sure, they may like a song because it's catchy, but more often than not, there's a more cerebral element to it—a song may remind them of that college bar they always went to or its beat propels them to run faster on a treadmill.

The same is true when someone enters a business and hears music. Something triggers in their brain, initiating a response that is sometimes emotional, sometimes physical, but always one that connects them to their environment. In fact, the way music lights up the brain in different ways is pretty fascinating.

The Three Ways Your Consumer Processes Music

The Physical Response

When music enters the brain through the cerebellum, it triggers our coordination and motor skills, causing us to subconsciously match what we do to what we hear. It's why relaxing, slow-tempo music leads diners to linger after dinner over additional glasses of wine, increasing their drink bill by 51% , and why up-tempo playlists encourage people to eat quicker, helping wait staff turn tables faster during busy times.

The Association Response

In a famous 1999 study, researchers found that when German music was played in a wine shop, the sales of German wine increased. When the music switched to French classics, shoppers put more French bottles in their baskets. Yet, when surveyed by researchers, shoppers were unaware of the effect the music had on their purchases . This phenomenon happens when our temporal lobe associates a sound with the familiar, causing us to respond in line with our past experiences.

The Pleasure Response

When music plays, our brain automatically shifts into game mode. As the music changes in terms of timbre, pitch or key, our prefrontal cortex, the area responsible for anticipation and planning, tries to guess what's next based on preconceived patterns. When it guesses correctly, a sense of pleasure overtakes it; when it doesn't, it's aroused by the excitement of the unexpected. As our brain is continually engaged, it distracts from the displeasure of waiting for a table in a crowded restaurant, yet heightens the hedonistic pleasure of dining once we're seated and enjoying our food.





Like what you hear?

There's more to background music than throwing on Spotify's Relax & Unwind playlist, or paying Mood Media and Play Network to do essentially the same thing for you.

The Ambiance iQ team has over 10 years of experience helping businesses refine their customer experiences.

[Contact us to see how music-applied neuroscience can make a huge impact on your business today.](#)