

MKT 3010 - Principles of Marketing

Olivia O'Keefe

Prof. Danny Weathers

07/25/2024

Case Study -

The Right Song for the Right Buy: How Music Influences Consumer Needs

The case study I have chosen to assess is *The Right Song for the Buy: How Music Influences Consumer Decisions*. This study explores the use of music in the marketing world and how a consumer's reaction to it can influence their feelings and actions regarding a product that it is associated with. Due to this aspect, choosing the "right" song to promote a product can be complex for company marketing teams. The consumer behavior in response to certain music can be affected by a specific situation and how the consumer perceives the time and place when the music is being played. The specific features of the music are also essential factors that will influence the perception of the music and the advertisement. Features include instruments, timbre and tempo, cultural context and background, language (if any), and cultural background of the target audience. This study also explores music's different empirical and theoretical evidence in connection to decision-making and emotions, the psychological mechanisms behind emotional response to music, and emotional perception constructed from psychophysical cues. The summary of this case study will be followed by the answers to the three proposed questions asked at the end of this study.

Put, only two main emotions universally elicited by music: happy and sad. It is a very difficult to express and successfully understand an emotion across different cultures. Marketers face three challenges for classifying the "right" music to advertise their product. The first is that in an estimated 35 to 45 percent of situations, music won't elicit any emotion from a listener (Susino, 2019). The second is that companies usually want to show emotions that are more complex than just happy or sad, so they need to use the help of other cues, like visuals, outside of music. And the third is to understand the culture of the advertisement's target audience.

An avenue marketers take when trying to use music to elicit an emotion in consumers to influence their behavior is Musical Fit. Musical Fit is how cultural associations are activated and

can lead to changes in behavior (Susino, 2019). This concept proposes that music can connect music associations with specific product attributes that can influence a consumer's choice. This shows that music can have the ability to affect consumers' buying choices. Several studies have been done to give this concept statistical credit. An example from Yeoh and North (2009), Indian, Chinese, and Malaysian students in a cafeteria were given the choice of Malay or Western food while Malay or Indian music was played in the background. When Malay music was played, more students opted to choose Malay food instead of Western food. Another example from the study by Zander (2006) found that listeners associate the brand of water being marketed based on the type of music played in the advertisement's background. When swing music was played, listeners perceived the water as "animated" and upbeat, while listeners who heard a piano ballad in the background perceived the water as calming.

There is a theory related to subconscious stereotyping in music, shown in the example of students choosing food associated with the music being played, which is called STEM or stereotype theory of emotion in music (Susino, 2019). In short, it aims to explain that listeners perceive emotion due to associations based on stereotypes, like a stereotype of a particular culture with the music. People may subconsciously pair a music genre or tempo with stereotyped emotions. An example of this was displayed in an antivirus software commercial, depicting the "evil" virus as a fictional heavy metal band and music. This was done because of the negative and malicious stereotype associated with heavy metal music (KixKidsMusic, 2010). Marketers try to work around this theory by breaking down music into two features. One is the instruments used, which are referred to as timbre. And two, how fast or slow the music is, referred to as tempo. In a commercial, Pepsi prioritized these two music features when wanting to connect the association that drinking their cola will make you happy. To achieve that, the company used a

fast techno song that many cultures can associate with dancing and, in turn, being happy, called Streamline by Newton (Stargazer2000, 2006).

If a company is only focusing on a specific culture while creating an advertisement accompanied by music, knowing the psychological mechanisms behind the emotional response to music can enhance the ability of consumers to match music to the target emotion. Nine mechanisms have been proposed so far that represent BREVEMAC (brain stem reflex; rhythmic entertainment; evaluative conditioning; contagion; visual imagery; episodic memory; musical expectancy; aesthetic judgment; cognitive appraisal) (Susino, 2019). These nine mechanisms are then able to be subdivided into two categories: universal and autobiographical (Susino, 2019). Universal is when a mechanism can apply to everyone, and autobiographical only applies to one person. An example of one of these mechanisms paired with its subcategory would be rhythmic entertainment and universal appliance. If a company aims to sell a calming product to consumers, then it would be ideal to use music with a slow tempo that mimics a steady heartbeat. A steady rhythm generally appeals to the universal emotion of tranquility. However, there is a problem with taking these mechanisms at face value. Some are more susceptible to personal narratives. For example, Levi's Jeans used a popular, strong song to accompany an advertisement to promote their sturdy pair of jeans. However, the song's band was criticized, and consumers started associating its bad controversy with the product. Personal associations with musical cues can be triggered in two different ways. Episodic memory is a conscious memory recollection that can be prompted by music. For example, listening to a specific sad song can remind a listener of a past relative. Evaluative conditioning regularly pairs music with other positive and negative stimuli that result in a conditioned emotion (Susino, 2019). For example, a song that a student regularly listens to during exam season may trigger a feeling of anxiety if heard unexpectedly.

Additionally, a repeated pairing of emotion to music can also be triggered by the culture and genre of music they are associated with.

A cue-redundancy model is an emotional perception constructed from psychophysical cues, like timbre and rhythm, and culture-specific cues and meaning (Susino, 2019). For example, it is important to know that a specific piece of music is culturally important. If a listener doesn't understand a song's language, it can still convey an emotion by psychophysical cues such as the song's tempo. Or, if listeners need to perceive feelings of calm and well-being through a guitar's bright timbre and slow tempo, it can be achieved. Following this article are three questions about its content and the application of the information given to real-world marketing situations.

Question one, what empirical and theoretical evidence suggests that music can affect purchase decision-making, and how is this related to emotion? Include an example of a company using elements of music to influence consumer emotion. The empirical evidence uses the statistics of musical fit to explain how cultural associations are activated and can influence consumer behavior. For example, a wine store that sold French and German wine discovered that when the store played French music, more customers bought French wine and vice versa when they played German music. The theoretical evidence uses the theories presented in STEM and BREVEMAC. For example, Pepsi strategically chose the song "Streamline" by Newton to associate its upbeat music with the happy feeling you get when drinking Pepsi cola.

Question two, explain how a business's failure to consider the music's musical features and culture-specific cues will impact purchasing decisions. Suggest an example advertising scenario. A company wants the music it uses to promote its products to elicit a feeling in its listeners to want to buy the product being promoted. At the highest level, marketers focus on the

culture of the target audience, audience language and music language (if applicable), and current pop-culture events. And at the lowest, most fundamental level, the music's timbre and tempo.

Question three: you work at an agency that has been put in charge of selecting the music to be used in an advertisement for a new product on the market, a phone. What important factors must be considered when choosing this music? According to this article, the timbre and tempo of the music chosen are fundamental factors in eliciting the desired emotion from consumers to influence them to buy the advertised phone. To appeal to a larger, more universal audience, the company should choose music that doesn't contain any words so that they are able to bypass any language barrier. Also, it would be a beneficial decision for marketers to look into the background of the creators of the songs to avoid a situation like Levi's, where the public associated the song and the song's creator's bad controversy with Levi's jeans. The chosen song should also not be super popular and widely known because consumers may already have specific emotions tied to the song in their episodic memory. Marketers should avoid more calming and mellow-sounding music to advertise a phone successfully. Instead, the music used should elicit excitement and wonder at its technology—for example, something similar to 2001: a Space Odyssey film's main theme.

In conclusion, this article offers many key points that marketing teams can use extensively to predict and influence consumer behavior in favor of their promoted product. Product choice is shown to be greatly influenced by emotion, which shows that companies need to take great care and consideration when choosing the "right" music to accompany an advertisement for their product. And choosing the "right" music can be a very complex process. Consumer behavior in response to certain music can be affected by unexpected and specific situations, and how the consumer perceives the place and time when the music is played. The

musical features, such as tempo and timbre, and the cultural background of the target audience also need to be considered. Important factors that will influence the perception of the music and of its accompanying advertisement.

References:

Yeoh, J. P., & North, A. C. (2009). The effects of musical fit on choice between competing pairs of cultural products. *Empirical Musicology Review*, 4(4), 130–133.

Rentfrow, P. J., & Gosling, S. D. (2007). The content and validity of music-genre stereotypes among college students. *Psychology of Music*, 35(2), 306–326.

Zentner, M., Grandjean, D., & Scherer, K. R. (2008). Emotions evoked by the sound of music: Characterization, classification, and measurement. *Emotion*, 8(4), 494–521.

Zander, M. F. (2006). Musical influences in advertising: How music modifies first impressions of product endorsers and brands. *Psychology of Music*, 34(4), 465–480.

Susino, M. (2014, September). *Cross-cultural emotional experience in response to music*. Paper presented at the International Conference of Students of Systematic Musicology, Goldsmith University, London.

Susino, M., & Schubert, E. (in press). Negative emotion stereotyping of Heavy Metal and Hip Hop music with positive lyrics. *Empirical Musicology Review*.

Susino, M., (2019). The right song for the buy: How music influences consumer decisions. In Sage Business Cases. SAGE Publications, Ltd.,
<https://doi.org/10.4135/9781526486059>