Chapter 14
The Aural Nature of Atmosphere in a Retail Setting

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ABSTRACT
The potential influence of music in eliciting organic reactions has been appreciated since ancient times. Knowing that consumers typically receive exposure to many hours of music each day, scientists and marketers have recognized its potential in consumer behaviour and decision making. Literature suggests that customers like hearing music when they shop, and feel that the retailer providing music cares about them. Retailers have to work diligently to keep their stores favourable in the mind of consumers. Both practitioners and researchers supported the argument that music is a beneficial element in the use of atmospherics in business. Based on the empirical research this chapter provides an insight into the role of music as an important element in retail store atmosphere. The chapter explains the complex character of music, its classifications and key variables, and interaction with other atmospheric cues. The chapter concludes that music has a significant influence on consumer behavior, and that retailers must ensure that they are playing music that their target markets like in their stores.

INTRODUCTION
Along with the rapid development of new store formats, there has been growing recognition that product, services and salesmen are not enough to increase sales, extend consumer’s time spent in the store, etc. Literature suggests (De Farias, 2010; Solomon, 2008) that until the 80’s, buyers were thought to be exclusively rational beings, whose purchasing choices were made after logical processing of the available information into a stream that came from the detection of a problem to their satisfaction with the purchase. Consumers respond to more than just the core product or service being offered when making purchase decisions (Billings, 1990, p. 1) and the decision to enter a particular store, how much time to spend inside, and to buy or not to buy is heavily influenced by the shopping environment and its effect on customers’ emotions (Bohl, 2012, p. 1). Many studies (e.g. Donovan and Rositer, 1982; Foxall, 1997;
Levy and Weitz, 2012) have found that the store environment significantly influences consumer’s in-store behaviour in ways they might not be aware. A store’s environment is comprised of a vast array of separate elements (such as colour, music, lighting, scent, etc.) which are highly interrelated and work together synergistically to affect consumers (Olahut et al., 2012, p. 319). Kotler (1973-74) was the first who encompassed all these elements under the term atmospherics, describing the conscious designing of space in store environments to produce certain effects in buyers. It is a multi-dimensional concept comprising the store’s physical characteristics, such as architecture, layout, signs and displays, colours, lighting, temperature, sounds and smells (Levy and Weitz, 2012).

Among the wide array of atmospheric elements, music is one of the very first that attracted researchers’ interest and has been shown to impact consumer behaviour (Michon and Chebat, 2004; Milliman, 1986). Burghelea et al. (2015) point out that their preliminary search on Business Source Complete for peer-reviewed journal articles, containing the word “music” resulted in a list of 1,516 titles. It has been identified as one of the most readily manipulated, influential and one of the most frequently used atmospheric factors to enhance the delivery of services to customers (Herrington and Capella, 1996; Yalch and Spangenberg, 1990). Support for the attractiveness of music as an atmospheric variable is evident in its potential to be more easily controlled by marketers than others (Broekemier et al., 2008, p. 60; Kellaris and Kent, 1992, p. 365). It is relatively inexpensive to provide, is easily changed, and is thought to have predictable appeals to individuals based on their ages and lifestyles (Yalch and Spangenberg, 1993, p. 632). Cheng and Hsieh (2011) narrate that music is an invisible language that stimulates emotions and internal feelings and, therefore, buyer shopping behaviour can be influenced by background music. The exposure to the right type of music can evoke a mood that can enhance purchase probability in consumers (Sullivan and Adcock, 2002, p. 156).

The main objective of this chapter is to explain the importance and buying influence of music in a retail setting. Namely, although customers are not paying attention to the background music, their actions can be subtly influenced by it (Peterson, 2016, p. 1). Following this introduction, the chapter begins with the theoretical background and the explanation of the complex character of music. A vast body of literature structured in a way that the historical development of using music to evoke customers’ reactions, music classifications and key variables, and interaction with other atmospheric cues was given. For the purpose of getting a better insight into the role of music as an important element of retail store atmosphere, it has been explored in the selected retail context of the Republic of Croatia in a study on a sample of customers buying in supermarkets in the capital city. Croatia is a Southeast European country with modern retailing forms (supermarkets, hypermarkets and discounters) which accounted for 72 percent of grocery sales in 2014 (Gfk, 2015). The top 10 retailers hold almost 80 percent of the Croatian market, similar to situations in the markets of other developed Central and East European countries. The chapter concludes with a summary of the major findings of the study, where managerial implications are also discussed.

**THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

Music is a complex, multidimensional stimulus with the potential to influence individual affect, cognition, and behaviour (Bruner, 1990). It is commonly defined (Zeesham and Hatem Obaid, 2015) as the art of organized sound, the purpose of which is to elicit an aesthetic response in listeners (Apel, 1973). In this section, the historical development of the interest for music as one of the key atmospheric variables is