

Music Matters. Part 2: Practice



For most of us music is an inescapable facet of everyday life. We all listen to it. In fact, on average, most of us spend around 18 hours each week actively doing so and many more hours passively consuming it in our living environment.

In the first part of Music Matters we looked at some of the theoretical reasons why music is such an important influence on human emotion and why, when looking at its role in helping to position a brand and communicate its values, music deserves to be taken more seriously.

This second part considers the practical selection of the right music for a particular brand (which we defined as the perception of a promise that lives in the minds of its audiences).

For the sake of this exercise we will look at music selection in the context of a destination or service brand targeting international business audiences. Other brand contexts may use some or all of these factors or introduce other categories as appropriate.

How to choose the right music?

There are many models, tools and approaches that we can use to determine the music that best fits the purpose and values of a particular brand. In the light of our recent research in this sector we will focus on the three top-level themes most pertinent to a destination or service brand:

Country Music, Tribal Music and Mood Music...

1. Country Music

For some brands 'country of origin' is a key component of their distinctive identity

(e.g. Harrods, Volvo, Chanel, Fosters, Victorinox, Muji)

Questions to consider:

- How important is the country of origin to the appeal of my brand?
- How can I leverage the appeal of national music to add value to the identity of my brand?
- What kind of national music is relevant? How and where can it be used to reinforce the appeal?



2. Tribal Music

People naturally cluster into like-minded or culturally-aligned 'tribes'. These may be defined by a shared lifestyle, religion, demographic or perhaps an expressed preference (for a football team... or musical hero or genre)

Music can become the cultural signifier of choice for some devotees of a particular artist, band or genre and it becomes an important part of their own identity (e.g. goths, rappers, etc.) or image (culture vultures, etc.)

This can be polarising, as music that strongly connects with one tribe can seem quite repellant to another...

Questions to consider:

- To what extent do my audiences cluster into distinct music 'tribes' or genre types?
- How can I leverage the appeal of particular music to add value to the identity of my brand?
- How can I segment my audiences to provide each group with the music they will best respond to?



3. Mood Music

Music has a powerful ability to set the scene in any situation and the right choice of mood music can be critical to setting the right tone.

The starting point is to define what mood is being sought.

Do we want people to be attentive or put at ease?

Stimulated or relaxed? Should they feel challenged, enthused and expressive or reflective, thoughtful and earnest?

One of the most powerful ways to get the mood right is to start by getting the music right!

Questions to consider:

- How do I want my audience to feel emotionally?
- What do I want audiences to remember about the character and implied 'mood' of my brand?
- How can I leverage the different effects that different kinds of music can have on my audiences and use this for different purposes at different moments?



Conclusion

- Music is a widely appreciated and powerful means of communication which can strongly influence choice and preference.
- Choosing music that fits is much more effective than choosing music we like.
- The right music will build distinctiveness, relevance and consistency for our brand as well as reinforcing its instinctive, emotional appeal.
- Music that empathises with national or regional identity can be particularly powerful for some brands. The culture of the audiences should also be carefully taken into account. Finally remember the mood and emotional ambience that you are seeking to create.

From today make a point of listening to the music that surrounds you and question how it could be better... after all, Music Matters.



This article is based on a presentation given at the annual conference of the International Congress and Convention Association, in Prague, November 2017. A video version of the original slides (including music samples), hosted by Vimeo, is available to view via this link: bit.ly/Music-Matters



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An experienced marketer-turned agency planner and strategy consultant, I am a creative thinker and articulate communicator.

I wrote a feature in Campaign to break into advertising, successfully persuaded McKinsey it had a brand and was handed an assignment by Rolex without a pitch. A father of four and a music-loving Francophile, I sing in New College, Oxford and lecture at a French university.

Brands that I have worked with directly include: BBC, Rolex, BAA, Discovery Channel, Deloitte, Firmenich, Farrer & Company, Reed Elsevier, BP, Ford, Jaguar, Citroën, McKinsey & Company, Goldman Sachs, Towers Watson, BT Global Services, Thales, Hitachi, Samsung and Motorola.

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