



MOOD:MEDIA

# 3 KEYS TO MAXIMIZING YOUR RETAIL MUSIC STRATEGY IN 2021

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As customers across the globe gradually return to in-store shopping, it's more important than ever to connect with them on a more emotional, more human level. COVID-19 has left many stressed, concerned and pent up, and consumers long for exciting, yet safe and welcoming out-of-home experiences. **It's a unique mix of emotions and a different desired experience that today's retailers must appeal to in order to connect with their customers and inspire them to return in the future.**

## **Fortunately, one of the most essential tools for doing so is in-store music.**

While it's easy to go on auto pilot and simply press play on your existing programming (which should be [fully-licensed for commercial usage](#)), it's critical to reconsider the music programming you're already playing and ensure that it's contributing to the experience that your customers and your employees need right now. All while staying true to your brand.

So, how do you approach your retail music strategy to establish more meaningful connections, create a welcoming environment and set your brand apart from competitors post-COVID? Here are three keys to doing just that.

### **1 GET LESS CLINICAL, AND MORE MUSICAL**

As we continue to come out of the pandemic, it will remain critical to assure customers that proper safety and security measures are in place at your stores. However, it's also important that your shopping experience doesn't feel sterile in the process - you still have to think about the overall brand experience and brand impression you wish to make. The key is to complement your focus on safety with an inviting atmosphere that will help customers look past the masks and hand sanitizer and have a more carefree and relaxing shopping experience. The right music can help make that type of impact.

In fact, recent studies prove it. [Global Web Index](#) showed that music can significantly lift our moods, with 58% of people across 7 countries revealing that they listened to calming music to help their mental health and wellbeing during the pandemic. [A Mood study](#) also showed that music is a top factor in lifting one's mood in-store, with 85% of consumers saying music has a positive impact on their experience. Simply put, with the right music, you can brighten your shoppers' mood and connect with them in more meaningful ways.

While you should choose music that your customers will enjoy and keep your playlists updated with the latest tracks, it's even more essential to ensure that your music strategy brings

together the values and personalities of your brand and your customer. It's about using music you and your customers love to help make that connection and give them a reason to say, "this store is a place for me."

### **2 STAY FRESH, AND SET THE PACE**

Did you know that music can help affect our perception of time? In a world where lengthy queues have become the norm, this fact may come as music to your retail business' ears. Help shorten wait times by introducing a new branded playlist into your store, providing a welcome distraction to customers waiting to pay for, collect or return items. When people are entertained, they're less likely to get bored or annoyed - and much likelier to return. The result is a better experience for customers and staff in what are still very trying times.

Speaking of new music, a comprehensive playlist refresh can also help fulfill your customers' eagerness for exploration and discovery in a brick-and-mortar setting. In turn, you'll inspire them to stay in your store for longer, so that they can appease their curiosity to hear the next song while browsing your new seasonal apparel section. Another recent [Mood study](#) demonstrated the impact of this strategy, showing how music increases customer dwell times and ultimately leads to higher sales.

Don't forget that music can also help set the pace for your in-store shoppers. The speed, rhythm and volume of music affects the pace of customer flow through stores. A smart retail music strategy will allow for different styles based on the time of the day and desired goals of the business.

For example, a common best practice that is still effective today is playing slower, down-tempo music to inspire shoppers to wander around and browse the merchandise for longer. Alternatively during busier times when maximum capacities are quickly being reached in stores, businesses may select upbeat, louder music to encourage customers to pick up their pace throughout the store. Doing so also amplifies a party-like vibe, which may be suitable for retail brands that appeal to a younger and hipper shopper. Ultimately, it all comes down to understanding the experience your clientele is seeking, when they're seeking it, and aligning it with your business goals and your brand.

### **3 BE BALANCED AND EMPATHETIC**

While you should aim to create a positive energy in your stores right now, it's important to factor empathy into your playlists. Yes, we all want commercial environments to feel as carefree as they were before the pandemic, but you shouldn't create an experience that is oblivious or insensitive to some of the challenges your customers may be going through right now. Be mindful of lyrical content in your playlists to make sure it's not only appropriate for your brand but that it's also appropriate in cultural context. Again, an experienced retail music designer or consultant can help you strike this balance and ensure that your track selections create an emotional connection while remaining appropriate.

## **REMEMBER - ALWAYS STAY TRUE TO YOUR BRAND.**

As you reconsider your programming and make adjustments to create more meaningful connections in this unique time, don't choose music that deviates from the values of the brand that you've worked so hard to create. While it may be tempting to replicate what your competitors are playing or to simply choose popular chart hits, staying true to your brand will ensure a welcoming and familiar experience that customers will appreciate, relate to and want to repeat.

A truly **qualified retail music designer** can work with you to define and clarify your audio branding strategy, combining data and expert curation to ensure that your music fosters this type of connection, clearly expresses your brand values, and always feels new. They'll help recommend playlists that best suit your brand and clientele, and they can also offer fully customized programs specifically for your stores.

Whether customers come to your store for leisure or to simply get the items they need as quickly as possible, now more than ever they are counting on you to provide a safe space and a pleasant environment where they can forget about the stresses of the outside world for a short while.

Music is instrumental in creating such an environment, and it allows you to engage your customers on an emotional level in a time when they most need that type of engagement. It is important not to view music as a commodity for your brand but rather as something to be used strategically to increase your consumers' ease in coming back to physical spaces and enhance their overall experience. The loyalty that results will pay off for your business, and if nothing else, your customers will walk away with a deeper connection with your brand, and a share-worthy experience.