

COLUMNS

Tips on ambient music at luxury retail stores to boost sales

March 24, 2017



Danny Turner is senior vice president of programming and production at Mood Media

By **Danny Turner**

Subscribe to **Luxury Daily**
Plus: Just released
State of Luxury 2019 **Save \$246 ▶**

Music is personal. It is transformative. And it has the inherent ability to tap into consumers' emotions.

Whether it is energizing Izzy Bizu at Lululemon, relaxing to Rhye at the spa or the amazing new Utopia at Chanel, ambient music plays an integral role in setting the mood and influencing purchases at retail.

As such, luxury brands are getting more sophisticated about creating highly curated playlists that echo brand attributes and engage target consumers.

White noise: Cutting through the clutter

In today's increasingly saturated marketplace, one of the biggest challenges retailers ask themselves is, "How do we cut through the clutter?"

Consumers are inundated on all sides by sensorial stimuli. Considering the current challenges facing bricks-and-mortar stores, creating curated customer experiences at retail is important now, more than ever.

The most effective way to cut through the clutter is with strategy, purpose and intent. Without these three tenets, brands are simply adding to the din of noise.

In truth, the strategy that brands adopt in 2017 have more relevance now given the unprecedented levels of sensorial competition.

But it is not as easy as simply pressing play. Much goes into orchestrating carefully curated playlists.

Press pause: Think brand first

The process of creating a music library is more calculated than it appears.

Before even delving into playlist curation, one must understand the subtle nuances of a brand. First task? Develop an audio identity.

Take a deep dive through brand books and directional guides to identify brand pillars.

Then develop brand attributes and create linkages between attributes and high-level music genres.

From there, start building out comprehensive music programs.

In what seems counterintuitive, brands land on music near the end of process.

At the onset, some may be thinking, "But wait a minute, I want to talk about Rihanna's new single."

It is paramount to start with the brand first. Build the experience and music will follow.

Inside track: Set the tone as a luxury brand

Let us rewind. What makes a luxury brand, a luxury brand? It does not follow trends it establishes them.

The same is true for in-store music libraries.

Luxury brands are far less inclined to follow music charts or Top 40 hits. They recognize that to maintain their status as an aspirational brand they must appeal to the upper echelon, creating an atmosphere that is distinctively compelling and uniquely different.

Fine tune: Play with tempo and volume

Your library is complete and bordering Questlove-worthy. Now what?

Whatever the genre acid jazz or electropop there are subtleties to consider.

Undeniably, music affects mood and, conversely, shopping behavior. Beats-per-minute often dictate the energy of a space.

Consideration should also be given to volume.

Music played at higher volumes moves customers more rapidly through retail stores, while quieter, slower-tempo tunes encourage potential purchasers to linger and peruse merchandise longer.

Remix the playlist: Employ resident deejays

Consumers nowadays have developed the expectation of having a higher degree of control over their experiences. The retail setting is no different.

Increasingly, brands are handing the controls over to customers, compelling shoppers to interact with playlists.

An odd paradox exists in the marketing world that the more elevated a brand, the more tenuous the brand position and the more precipitous the fall from grace.

As such, luxury brands, more than anyone, are hyper-focused on controlling every facet of their brand. It seems like a no-brainer, but the more defined a brand's position, the more defined its in-store music experience must be.

TO KEEP UP with the ever-changing retail landscape, luxury brands should take a tailored approach to curating engaging audio experiences in-store.

But the real gauge of success?

Witnessing a consumer pause mid-impulse buy to raise their iPhone in the air and Shazam a song playing overhead. It is then that brands truly know that they have hit a high note.

*Danny Turner is senior vice president of programming and production at **Mood Media**, Charlotte, NC. Reach him at danny.turner@moodmedia.com.*