Intrusive Music: The Perception of Everyday Music Explored by Diaries

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Abstract

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Keywords

Diaries, Intrusive Music, Retail Outlets, and Thematic Analysis

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This paper describes research investigating the perception of intrusive music, that is, music heard when choice, volume, and occurrence are not under the control of the participant. Participants were directed to record diary accounts of episodes in which music was played in instances when they were not in control of the decision to play the music or any characteristic of it, and to record various items about the music, together with any effects on themselves. Strong reactions were discovered during thematic analysis- reactions influencing mood, energy, distractibility, desire to stay or return, and intention to purchase. The implications for commercial use of music are discussed along with the efficacy of the diary method in this context. Key Words: Diaries, Intrusive Music, Retail Outlets, and Thematic Analysis

Introduction

Music has a profound effect on those hearing it. It has the power to create and influence moods and emotions, alleviate boredom, facilitate concentration and motivation, and, according to DeNora (2000), to act as a force for social ordering as well as action, both at the level of the individual and collective. DeNora goes further and says that it can reconstruct the listener's experience, a phenomenon that is under-researched and not clearly understood. Music plays an important role in consumerism, not just the multi-million pound industry it represents in its own right, but the increasing use of it in shops, bars, and restaurants, where it is intended to have beneficial effects on customers and their likelihood to spend. Consumer behaviour does appear to be manipulated and influenced by the presence of music. This is a recognised finding in early research in the area and has become an established "known" in the retail trade. For example, Gardner's (1985) review of the effect of mood on consumer behaviour found that music was a major influence for changes in buying behaviour. The ubiquitous use of music in retail outlets, restaurants, and bars would seem to indicate to an observer that the public appears to accept the presence of music, and that retailers recognise its use is required. However, it is suggested that music has become such a part of everyday life that mainstream social science research is failing to address its effects (Konecni, 1982). Additionally, according to Bruner (1990), there is little attention paid to the quality or appropriateness of the music when used in consumer outlets or, indeed, the effect of the music individually or collectively. Adorno (1976) argued that there is a "culture industry" which keeps the population submissive and unreceptive, allowing capitalism to dominate instead of happiness. Mass media create illusory pleasure and false needs. A strong claim and politically partisan, but if our listening behaviour is so contextualised and possibly passive, then it is likely that we have yet to examine and explain the effects of musical stimuli, their quality and their form, on the listening situation (DeNora, 2000; North & Hargreaves, 1996). This research then attempted to address these questions and discover the extent to which music is regarded as unwelcome noise or welcomed stimuli.

The research must also be placed in my own personal context, notwithstanding any wider implications it might have. I work and research in a Psychology department of a UK university, but I am also an amateur musician and find it frustrating to listen to badly chosen and badly transmitted

music in every aspect of life, whether shopping, relaxing, or working. It is also astonishing that others around me seem to either not be irritated by the intrusion or, even more astonishingly, not to notice it! I chose then to find out whether my views were accurate, that people do not mind, or do not notice, what I perceive as the intrusion and implicit manipulation by retailers of the use of music.

Investigations into relationships between music and consumer effects have concentrated on examining the ways that music can be used to improve the mood of customers, with a view to increasing sales. Kotler (1974) first introduced the concept of "store atmospherics" to account for the efforts involved in the design of purchasing environments in order to create specific emotional influences on the consumer. Store atmospherics are the physical elements of a store's interior, which determine its atmosphere; they stimulate perceptual and emotional responses with the intention of positively affecting purchase behaviour. Retailers know there is a link between a store's atmosphere and its financial performance. Intangible details ranging from lighting to music to visual messaging all play an interconnected role in improving the shopping experience, building customer traffic and, ultimately, lifting sales (Shapiro, 2004). Retailers understand, without addressing the question, that there is a link between atmosphere and financial performance in stores, restaurants, and pubs. North and Hargreaves (1998) explored how music affects the perceived atmosphere of a café. Their study showed that music has mediating effects on the café and its image, and suggests that music should condition responses to the environment in which it is played. However, the pervasiveness of music use and the inappropriateness of music in context may have the opposite effect, suggesting that we need to re-examine and re-educate retailers on the practice.

The potentially negative effects of music have been examined. Ramos (1993) investigated whether "on-hold music" was having the effect of losing calls. His results showed that the majority of disconnections occurred when "relaxing" music was played, followed by pop, and country. Comments from clients suggested that it was the inappropriateness of the music rather than any other factor that led the client to put down the phone. Inappropriateness here was described as a mismatch between the reason for the call and the perceived intent of the music, a subjective assessment. This was supported by North, Hargreaves, and McKendrick (1999) who demonstrated that estimated waiting time is less if the client has heard music appropriate to their call, (measured by a subjective assessment of how the music fit the caller's expectation), which is designed to keep their attention.

It has long been established that the presence of music in a working environment can increase productivity and reduce errors (Gardner & McGehee, 1949). However, further investigations show that the type of music is very important with "up-beat" music increasing arousal levels (Fisher & Greenberg, 1972). These effects do not appear to map directly onto commercial use of music. The use of loud music was quoted as a direct reason for reporting a "terrible retail experience" in a study by Arnold, Reynolds, Ponder, and Lueg (2005). Music is used prominently in commercial settings, such as retail outlets, and to accompany (or even direct) television advertisements. The assumption appears to be that particular music used in these settings will produce an effect akin to the reflex action of a salivating dog (Gorn, 1982). Well-liked music should produce pleasurable responses and therefore positive attitudes towards a product, or the brand, according to this model of consumer behaviour. This is, however, not based on sound research findings, as earlier empirical work produced inconsistent findings and it is clear a more sophisticated model is needed for the increasingly more sophisticated consumer. It is acknowledged that today's consumers have a greater experience of a broader array of brands and have become more aware of the effect that advertising has on their choices. This, in turn, raises the issue of the level of complexity of marketing material in response to this change in level of consumer sophistication (Barwise, 1997). The business world is becoming increasingly aware that shifts in consumer tastes are taking place, with the recognition that the retail world must change to

meet these demands (McEnally & de Chernatony, 1999). Englis and Pennell (1994) discovered that there are many negative effects that can be identified in the use of music, with their major finding being that meaning in music, and therefore its effect, is highly dependent on the individual consumer. Each listener has his or her own interpretation of the music, whether heard before or not. Popular music and well-known tunes already have their meaning imbued, and the effect of the use of them cannot be predicted. When a popular piece of music is used for advertising the result is often a dislike for the music or the product, or an enhancement of the product with a proportional reduction in the appreciation of the music. Use in advertising has the effect of cheapening the music, although this is possibly the disapproval found when widening access to something hitherto perceived as exclusive to special groups of people. Such an extension of access is perceived as leading to a loss of legitimacy of classical music (Polaschegg, 1998). It has been argued that classical music was traditionally the province of the socially dominant upper classes, forming the auditory essence of an elite culture. However, it has today lost this claim to be the only relevant musical genre in music history or musicology, due to this apparent loss of legitimacy. This has resulted either from the use of classical music in advertising, or that this very readiness to be used in this way is an indicator of the "de-legitimacy" (Institut für Musiksoziologie, 2002).

Individual differences account for a large proportion of music preference. Rawlings and Ciancarellii (1997) found correlations between music preference and elements of the "five-factor measure of personality." The five-factor model comprises five personality dimensions: Openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism. The five dimensions are held to be a complete description of personality. The factors are dimensions, not types, so people vary on them, with most people falling in-between the extremes. According to this model, someone low in constraint is more likely to be a risk-taker and an excitement seeker. According to Rawlings and Ciancerelli, excitement seekers like rock music, but not classical music, whereas those "open to experience" are less judgemental and like a diverse range of styles. Extraverts appear to like pop music.

However there are characteristics of the music itself that can shape how the listener reacts given the individual differences described above. Volume, or, more correctly loudness, produces extreme reactions regardless of the type of music. When there is a delay in services, for example, loud music being played during the wait appears to increase the annoyance (with no music the least annoyance) and estimates of wait time are longest, so the perception of delay is longer when annoyed by loud music (Cameron, 1996). There is also a connection between preferred volume level and personality (Staum & Brotons, 2000) in that introverts, requiring less intense stimulation levels, they prefer quieter music. Another characteristic of music that is linked to individual characteristics of the listener can be the tendency to develop the so-called "earworm" (Kellaris, 2003). An earworm is the result of listening to a piece of music that replays over and over again in the mind. Kellaris terms it a cognitive itch, suggesting that certain songs have properties that could almost be termed "psychological histamines," and that the only way to scratch the resulting itch, or use a "psychological anti-histamine" is to repeat the offending melody in the mind. He also suggests that some people are more susceptible than others. Women tend to be more susceptible than men, and musicians are more susceptible than non-musicians.

Music then has a profound effect on the listener, which might be mediated by characteristics of the music itself. However, it is suggested that it has become such a part of everyday life that music psychology is failing to address these effects. Music is such a part of our lives that we listen to it whether we want to or not, and music that we do not like might have such a negative effect that the consequences must be addressed. This study then aimed to highlight natural music exposure and identify important factors and outcomes within personal experience, of listening to music when we

have no choice in the matter, and to identify areas where we need to ask questions about the use of music and re-educate the users.

Method

Although driven by a desire to discover whether my own personal feelings were reflected in others, the background literature revealed ambiguity about the view of music in everyday life. It is clear that music is being used to influence consumers, but would this be seen as negatively as I view it myself? Also, would music in other contexts be viewed as "intrusive" or merely as part of the overall perceptual scene? The researcher decided to ensure that the collection of data be as open as possible, and that participants would only be guided to direct their observations as much as necessary to record responses to music in the natural settings of their lives. The recorded observations could then be analysed when complete, and they were all collected so as to avoid any influence my own views might have on the recordings in the diaries. In addition, in order to ensure emergent themes were accurately represented, a non-participating co-judge analysed the records too. Therefore, employment of a co-judge was a measure designed to not only check accuracy of analysis, but to prevent my bias affected the process. It is accepted, indeed welcomed, that subjective views will form part of a researcher's process and outcome (Brown, 1996), but that the researcher has a responsibility to manage this influence. Assistance from another person not involved in the process is seen as a suitable measure towards reducing the input of bias (Mehra, 2001)

A diary format was selected in order to gain real-life experiences from personal accounts. Participants were directed to record accounts of episodes in which music was played in instances when they were not in control of the decision to play the music, and to record various items about the music, together with any effects on themselves.

Diary methods have a long history in social research, particularly relevant in this case is an investigation of leisure behaviour by Harvey, in 1990, in which time diaries were collected and analysed. Time diaries allow participants to record the total flow of activities and attendant perceptions. Such data can be studied at the macro and micro level. At the micro level, time points, individuals, and events can be studied, for example, what any individual participant is doing at any one time. This would give a rich detailed sense of the activities that participant may carry out, or, in the case of the present study, what participants are doing when they hear music. At the macro level, it is meaningful to study sub-populations, bundles of time, and aggregated events. So, for example, it might be appropriate to provide a summative account of a week's activities as the proportion of time spent by the whole group on one type of activity. Another relevant study is the review of consumer time use by Robinson and Nicosia (1991), in which they highlighted studies where diary use was the prevalent method of choice and that identified certain aspects of consumer behaviour. There is also evidence that recording emotional content can be facilitated by the diary method. In 1990, Kette had thirty inmates of an Austrian high-security prison for men record, in structured diaries, whether they felt good or bad, and a description of mood. Kette was examining whether there were coping strategies for dealing with the various stresses arising from the complete social control and the diverse deprivations within the "total institution" of a prison, and whether this was mediated by personality characteristics. He concluded that the diary method was the richest form in which this data could be collected in order to compare it with outer, quantitative measures of personality.

Diary research then is a research method in which the participant writes a diary about his/her day-to-day behaviour relevant to the research question. Each participant is provided with a paper leaflet in which the pages are printed in advance with pertinent points or questions, in this case questions

about when and where the music was heard, whether the participant was in control of the choice to listen or anything else in respect of the music, and what reaction was perceived in response to the music. Formats of diaries can vary from open format to highly structured, where all activities are pre-categorised. The advantage of free-form is seen in allowing for greater flexibility of expression, but is highly labour intensive both for the diarist and the researcher in preparation and analysis, especially in large scale projects where resources may be easily consumed. Certain design issues are therefore of paramount importance, and in this instance it was decided that the diary would be somewhere in the middle of the continuum from free-form to structured, in that the recording material given to the participant would only have the pertinent points on each page. The pages therefore contained space to record date, time, place, whether the participant was alone or otherwise, type of music, and volume. Then the participant had a blank space in which to write about each time they experienced music, when the choice of music and whether to listen was outside their personal control. They were directed to record how they felt about each instance, and to record as much about the music as they could.

Another issue to be taken into account was that diaries may be prone to errors beyond those encountered in survey or interview techniques (Silberstein & Scott, 1991). These include conditioning, incomplete recording of information and under-reporting, inadequate recall, insufficient cooperation, and sample selection bias. These can be minimised by ensuring the diary keeping period is of optimum length (overcoming cooperation difficulties and under-reporting or inadequate recall), ensuring the literacy level of all participants (although this may exclude some sections of a population from participation), and personal recruitment of participants and collection of the diaries. This last issue contributes to minimising the effect of attrition and can ensure that errors may be addressed immediately on collection. It may, of course, jeopardise confidentiality

A particular problem of interest is that of conditioning. This is a phenomenon noted in that participants may change behaviour as a result of keeping the diary, and the first day is atypical of the rest of the diary. It has been found that an intermediate visit from an interviewer, during the diary keeping period, helps preserve "good" diary keeping, as the researcher, without viewing the diary, can remind the participant of the intent of the diary-keeping process and re-focus them onto the issue. If a researcher visits, or talks to a participant, there is no need to discuss the content of the diary, but if the participant has been neglectful of the diary, a reminder of the focus of the research and a reiteration of the importance of the individual input can often serve to strengthen the participant's resolve to contribute.

In the current study, participants were directed to keep accounts of encounters in which music is not the primary focus (as would be the case in, for example, a concert), but where it is an accompaniment to non-music-focussed behaviour such as shopping, visiting the gym, cafés, etc.

The research, its intent, protocols and procedures for ethical treatment of participants, were submitted for the scrutiny of the University's Research Ethics Committee. Two members of the committee scrutinise the proposal and make recommendations to the committee as to acceptance. The researcher is bound by the Code of Conduct of the British Psychological Society (see http://www.bps.org.uk/the-society/ethics-rules-charter-code-of-conduct/code-of-conduct/), and all procedures were deemed to comply with this stringent code, and therefore acceptable to the University Research Ethics Committee.

Participants were recruited by posters placed around the University campus, including the performing arts department and other disciplines. Volunteers were asked to contact the researcher via University email or telephone. Twenty women and fifteen men responded, and five women were not selected, as they were students or colleagues of the researcher. Therefore, fifteen men and fifteen women aged between 20 and 45 gave informed consent to participation after an explanation of the

objectives of the data collection was given, together with assurances of anonymity and confidentiality (i.e., that the identity of a participant was never revealed except to the primary researcher, who could only link responses to a participant via the separately stored identity codes). Participant identities were never revealed, and once the diaries were complete they were submitted to the researcher via mail with no identifying marks other than a code. Participants were also informed of their right to withdraw from the study and to withdraw the use of their data at any time up to a cut-off point. The cut-off point was the time at which the research analysis was complete and the findings submitted for publication. Withdrawal of data was facilitated by the use of the research identification code, which the participant could use to request withdrawal of the data without having to supply their name. This ensured confidentiality to the extent that, although the name could be matched to the code via a separately stored file (by the researcher only), this was never done, and no participant requested withdrawal. All records were stored securely in a locked filing cabinet and only the researcher had access to this (the co-judge received copies stripped of all identifiers other than the code). In this way, confidentiality was also assured. This practice complies with the British Psychological Society's principles for research with human participants, an extract is included as an appendix to this article (Appendix A), and see also http://www.bps.org.uk/the-society/ethics-rules-charter-code-of-conduct/code-of-conduct/

In addition to demographic data, a request was made to identify preferred musical style. The participant was then equipped with a printed notebook containing *aide-memoires* for the pertinent points on each page, together with space to record date, time, place, status (alone or otherwise), type of music, and volume, and asked to write about each experience of music that was outside their personal control. This was to ensure a certain level of consistency in the report for comparison, but the format was deliberately open. The dairy was to be completed for a period of ten consecutive days.

Results and Interpretation of Data

Thematic analysis refers to the process of making explicit structures and meanings that are embodied in a text. It may be noted that many pieces of research utilising thematic analysis do not make explicit the process of analytical construction. This often makes it difficult for readers to determine exactly how the findings were derived and interpreted. For this reason this section will attempt to explicate the process used here.

In this research the completed diary text was subjected to thematic analysis in order to highlight and note regularly occurring and/or atypical themes. Two readers (researcher and volunteer[1]) examined the text as a whole in what was termed a thematic overview (see Figure 1). Each reader identified a form of response to the music during sole reading, highlighting the occurrence on each diary with different colours, each colour indicating a source of the emergent theme. Each reader then exchanged the highlighted material and read each other's commentary, indicating agreement or not. The exchange went on once more and identified agreement or not. This elicited agreed summarising themes of:

A. emotional reaction
B. characteristic of music
C. consequent behaviour

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[1] The volunteer co-judge is a colleague and experienced researcher in Social Sciences, with an understanding and experience of thematic analysis, but who does not have any particular interest in the topic under investigation, and who took no further part in the research.

Where the text was considered to be expressing a personal and emotional consequence of hearing the music, for example "I was upset that my sleep was disturbed" or "I felt really happy at hearing my favourite piece of music," the text was highlighted as belonging to A. If the text was a more technical description of the music, such as its volume or type, the text highlight was B. If the text described a behaviour as a result of the music, for example, "I immediately turned round and left the shop" or "I asked my flatmate to turn it down," it was highlighted as C. Some text could not be solely identified as one of these areas alone, such as "the music had such a loud bass line I could not ignore it," and therefore as dual identified as both A and B. Consequent behaviours were all identified as solely belonging to one theme however.

There was a minimal amount of material that the readers could not agree as belonging to the themes above such as personal preference ("I wish they had been playing some blues rather than jazz") or personal antagonism ("I've always disliked my neighbour's choices of everything, so I guess I just dislike their music too"), and these areas were set aside for further analysis, however, they are not included here as being outside of aims of the study.

All the diaries contained examples of the forms of expression of interest, and they were further analysed using what was termed as a selective sub-categorisation (see Figure 2). This means that the text that contained comments around the experience and effect of music was further categorised under more specific headings that each reader compiled independently. These headings, and the text within each were compared for agreement, and the categories described below identified as the final groupings.

It is further acknowledged that making explicit thematic elements of experiences is a complex process, which will be inherently inductive. This means that themes are not objects or generalisations, but expressions of phenomenological experience, and are of heuristic importance. The summarising process described here should therefore be taken as description of process, and that the inductive process of detecting patterns and regularities in order to build theoretical suppositions about experience cannot always be completely explicit.

- Each judge approached the diary records with a set of structural and analytical aims: the identification of what each participant had written in their record in response to their given instructions, the identification of reactions and behaviour from the written text that the participants recorded as their response to hearing music, and the identification of whether there was something about the music heard that produced certain types of response.
- Each diary was read several times and different types of comments that participants were making identified. It was already known that the participants were directed to observe several things: the situation they were in when they heard the music, anything about the music that could be identified, anything about the music that was particularly noteworthy, their reaction to hearing the music, and any action they took as a consequence of hearing the music.
- Each type of comment was highlighted with a different colour, the two judges then compared this level of identification to ensure that both were in agreement about where each comment lay in this first structural level of analysis. Any comments that laid outside the above list of observation types were also identified and noted. In order to clarify this process, the stages and progression between them are displayed in Figure 1 and the development of themes is displayed in figure 2.

*Figure 1*. Stages of thematic analysis from diaries to themes.
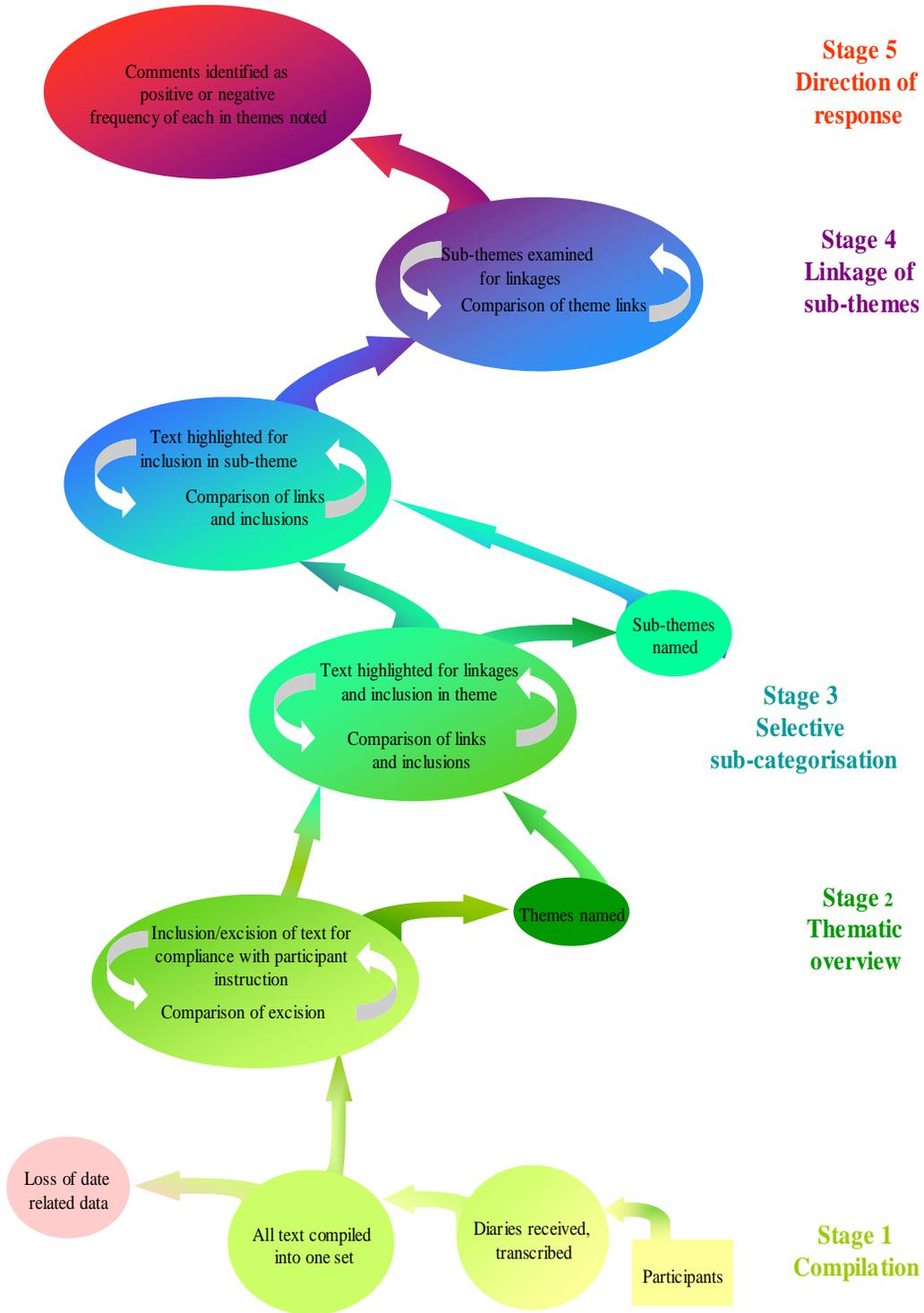
- It was agreed that the comments of interest to the study's aims lay, initially, in items "d" and "e" of the list, so the second level of analysis entailed each judge returning to the text and annotating, in each highlighted section, text that contained such comments. This resulted in each record having a host of annotations, giving a second level, descriptive, analysis of the text. This was done via several readings of the records, using the list identifiers "d" and "e" to comb all the text to see if there were any subsidiary commentaries by the participants. For example, a participant (female, 35) wrote, "I liked the music very much as it was a type I like (Country and Western), but a new tune." this being noted as type "d," a reaction to the music, but later in the record she stated that she "found it annoying not to be able to talk as it was played so loudly," *initially* noted as type "c" (items about the music that were noteworthy), but on second level analytical reading was also identified as a reaction to the music.

- This iterative process resulted in summary descriptions of the whole set of annotations. The third level was then started, a first level of interpretation. Each reaction and consequent piece of behaviour was identified as positive or negative, and the types of reaction identified. At this stage each judge compared the interpretations, coming to a consensus of opinion if they did not agree. There were very few points at which there was not agreement: whether "goosebumps" (the involuntary raising of skin at the base of body hairs experience during cold or the experience of strong emotions, and noted by 7 different participants at various times during their diary keeping) was a reaction to the music or a consequence piece of behaviour. It was decided that it was an indication of a strong reaction and that it should be interpreted as positive unless any other accompanying text gave evidence that it was a negative reaction. This decision was made on the basis of Panksepp's (1995) research on the physical reactions produced by listening to music with an emotive meaning for the listener

  One participant (female, 25) noted that she "asked a waitress to see if the music could be turned down," but felt "embarrassed by the waitress' astonished reaction". There was a discussion around whether this was a reaction to the music or not, it was agreed that it was not, but could be a form of consequent behaviour.

- It was also agreed that the reactions or behaviour needed to be linked to elements of information about either the music or the situation recorded in the diaries. So a fourth level of analysis was started with each identified comment identifying a reaction or behaviour being linked to salient points about the music and/or the situation in which it was heard.

- This process of analysis allowed us to summarise reactions into positive and negative, and/or identify consequent behaviour, which was indicative of positive or negative reactions. For example, participants could write whether they enjoyed hearing the music or not and whether they left the immediate situation or stayed, and whether anything else resulted in certain types of behaviour as a direct consequence of their reactions. In this way, we could build a contextual framework to identify themes within the records. Each judge returned separately to the text and extracted a third level of analysis linking reaction and behaviour to items about the music, and this led to a thematic framework.

  The judges summarised common themes identified and this extraction was compared. Judges showed 80% consistency (reliability) and ten sub-categories were then chosen for analysis. These were: volume, tempo, repetition, clash/distraction, atmosphere/context, time, style, wait, purchase intention, and quality.

Figure 2. Development of themes and sub-themes.
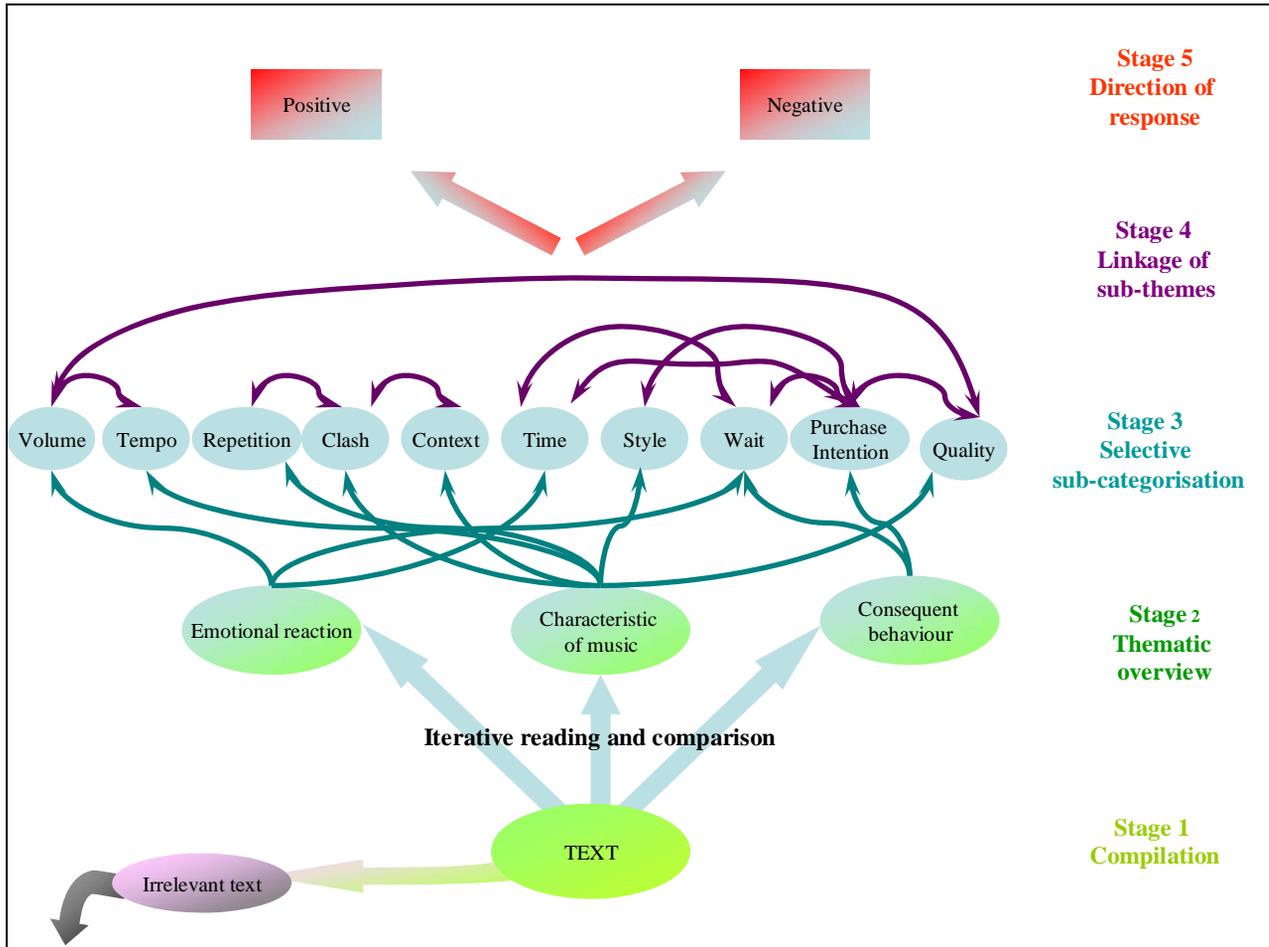
Data was then coded under these categories. Figure 3 shows the proportion in frequencies that each theme took in the total diaries, and whether these were derived from positive or negative comments.

Figure 3. The proportion in frequencies of each theme and direction of comments.
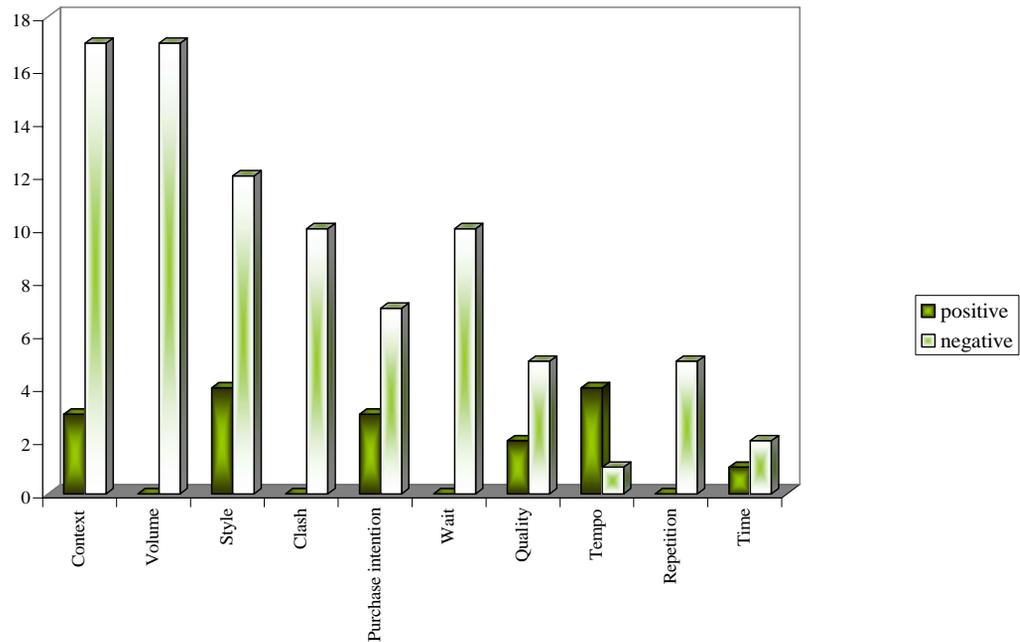
Three major themes, in terms of proportion in the accounts, will be discussed further.

Context

The context in which the music was played was a major factor. There appears to be "right" and "wrong" contexts for music and a fit between types of music in certain contexts. One participant mentioned that s/he would visit Starbucks again as "…it was so cool the first time. The music was different but really good, and I felt just really chilled, happy to be there and wanted to stay." However, inappropriate contexts are just as likely to have the opposite effect, a noisy and hectic atmosphere of a doctor's surgery not being helped at all by the music being played.

Volume

Well-liked pieces played at inappropriate volumes produced a clear negative effect. "My flatmate is often playing his music loud, that annoys me anyway, even more so if I hate the music," wrote one participant. In his own home, the loudness of the music was particularly annoying and frustrating. When shopping, several participants found it difficult to concentrate and could not wait to get out of the shop, or had decided not to return. This result supports the findings of Cameron (1996) who found that high volume produced the highest level of annoyance. The "wrong" volume chosen by a venue can have an immediate negative effect, sometimes causing the consumer to leave urgently. It appears this level of annoyance spreads to the Walkman of the neighbour on the train too.

Style

Generally, when the style of the music was to the listener's liking, then negative effects were reduced. In fact, increased liking for environments can result. One participant reported that music to

her liking was playing in a restaurant, and even though it was too loud, the style of the music outweighed the other possible negative effects, including poor service. However, when the music is not of a preferred style, then loud volume, poor reproduction quality, etc. became important.

Other themes could be analysed in the same way, with each category of analysis producing positive effects when the participant perceived the music component to be appropriate or likable, but negative effects when the music being played was, for example, an inappropriate tempo for the context, or the participant felt s/he was being kept waiting on-hold for an unacceptable length of time. Given that music is introduced to retail and service outlets with the intention of enhancing retail experience, and hence influencing and increasing the spending behaviour of the consumer, it is interesting to note the effect music had on purchase intentions in this group of participants.

Purchase Intentions

Although fifth in frequency of occurrence of themes, it did elicit particularly strong reactions, both negative and positive. One participant recalled, "I noticed the music straight away and I really liked it, I even thought the clothes were cool, because the music was". A very close link is indicated between the music, the product, and the desire to buy it. Milliman's (1986) study in which relaxing (slow tempo) music in a restaurant resulted in slower eating and a subsequent increase in spending, showed music can create a context in which purchasing is enhanced. However, participants in the present study showed definite negative effects on purchase intentions with strong desires to leave the setting as loud music or heavy bass lines produce discomfort or even anger.

> The shop was empty before we went in and there was no music playing. As we went in, the assistant turned on the music, and I had to get out of the shop almost immediately, the heavy thump of the bass was giving me a headache!

"Why do they do it?? There was some really mellow rock playing, then it switched to real head banger stuff. It was a restaurant for (expletive deleted) sake. I asked them to turn it off or we'd leave"

Generally, all participants experienced a range of positive and negative effects.

Discussion

The results of this diary-based study indicate that there are many aspects of music in the background of our lives that are viewed in particular ways, either positively or negatively, and that these views can change dependent on context and may be linked to the characteristics of the listener and of the music, and the way that the music is used by retailers.

Participants in this study reported an increased awareness of intrusive music, suggesting that, hitherto, the perception of music in the environment was subjugated in some way. As a direct result of participation, perceptions of music have been heightened, and thinking has been shaped by the diary-keeping task. This suggests the possibility that there is an unconscious desensitisation that is the normal state with respect to environmental music, and that the diary keeping has sensitised the participants. However, this is speculative and may form the basis of an investigation of the use of the method.

In addition, the study shows that participants are ready to air personal opinions with regard to how music should be used. Strong views were expressed, to the extent of suggesting music should be avoided completely in certain contexts. High volume, strong bass-line, and poor quality were generally

not appreciated, particularly in the daytime. Volume appears to be a major factor in discouraging the participants as consumers from remaining in or returning to particular venues, and therefore from spending money.

Applications of Findings

This study would appear to indicate that some thorough market research is required to ensure that, where music is used, it can be more consistently structured towards meeting consumer needs and preferences. If such research demonstrates that consumers have a poor perception of music in such settings, then perhaps those with responsibility for insisting on music use in the retail trade should reflect on why they are using it. There are various strengths and weaknesses in the way music is utilised commercially, and the implication is that this should be addressed more directly in order to achieve a more attractive consumer environment. Retailers need to address the fact that people are experiencing negative effects of their use of music in their outlets. It is clear that the intention, in using music, is to satisfy the consumer in some way, but in fact that it can detract from any pleasurable experience. The aim of retailers and service providers, in the use of music, should be to reflect the atmosphere of stores, products, and services, generating a comfortable experience. This is a challenging objective, but common ground must be established if retailers are to take advantage of the positive influences of music. Konecni (1982, p. 500) has suggested that music is "embedded in the stream of daily life," but this present study would seem to suggest that when attention is paid to this stream, attention is also paid the possibility of "disembedding" from the stream, and more elements of choice are brought to bear. If individuals make choices based on personal preferences, then larger groups may too. In this case, those retailers providing a pleasurable atmosphere, resulting in positive reactions, will benefit and other retailers may find they are using the supposed environmental persuasion techniques in ways which will not provide benefit to them or their consumers.

Conclusion

This study has met its objective to examine the effect of background music that we have not chosen to hear, which might be defined as intrusive. In general, when people pay attention to this music, the reactions are mixed with many being negative when aspects of the music are perceived to be unattractive, but with some clear positive reactions. It is unclear as yet whether individual differences account for the range of reactions seen. There is a sex difference seen here, albeit with a small sample, but there may also be differences dependent on musicianship status or certain personality, and central nervous system differences. This may need to be addressed in future research.

The use of the diary method itself does appear to be an appropriate way to address the issues inherent in our leisure time, and to monitor aspects of the environment that might be intruding. However, it does appear that asking people to monitor music in this way has meant that they started to pay attention to something that might have been ignored and in the background. Further research might need to address this by measuring the effect of diary keeping. A measure of attendance to music before the diary period could be compared to another after the diary has stopped.

One further warning about the study is appropriate too. The keeping of the diary had the effect of making the participants pay more attention to the music around them, with thinking about music being shaped by the diary keeping. If, as listeners of no choice, we start to pay more attention to what is embedded in our stream of life, then perhaps those who "inflict" music of poor sound quality and

uncontrollable volume upon us had better pay heed, the people who took part in this study may represent others of us, who well may vote with our ears, followed by our feet.

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Appendix A

Ethical Guidelines Implemented in this Research

The following is an extract from the British Psychological Society Guidelines for Research with Human Participants, provided in order to highlight the ethical principles used on this research.

Consent

1.   Whenever possible, the investigator should inform all participants of the objectives of the investigation. The investigator should inform the participants of all aspects of the research or intervention that might reasonably be expected to influence willingness to participate. The investigator should, normally, explain all other aspects of the research or intervention about which the participants enquire. Failure to make full disclosure prior to obtaining informed consent requires additional safeguards to protect the welfare and dignity of the participants (see Section 4).

2.   Investigators should realise that they are often in a position of authority or influence over participants who may be their students, employees or clients. This relationship must not be allowed to pressurise the participants to take part in, or remain in, an investigation.

Withdrawal from the investigation

1.   At the onset of the investigation investigators should make plain to participants their right to withdraw from the research at any time, irrespective of whether or not payment or other inducement has been offered. It is recognised that this may be difficult in certain observational or organisational settings, but nevertheless the investigator must attempt to ensure that participants (including children) know of their right to withdraw

2.   In the light of experience of the investigation, or as a result of debriefing, the participant has the right to withdraw retrospectively any consent given, and to require that their own data, including recordings, be destroyed.

Confidentiality

1.   Subject to the requirements of legislation, including the Data Protection Act, information obtained about a participant during an investigation is confidential unless otherwise agreed in advance. Investigators who are put under pressure to disclose confidential information should draw this point to the attention of those exerting such pressure. Participants in psychological research have a right to expect that information they provide will be treated confidentially and, if published, will not be identifiable as theirs. In the event that confidentiality and/or anonymity cannot be guaranteed, the participant must be warned of this in advance of agreeing to participate.

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