

Why restaurants play music while you eat

September 28 2015, by David Bradley

Research in India has found that restaurateurs in different food establishments there can influence how long their customers stay, how much they eat and whether or not they come back for seconds. The study of music as an accompaniment to a meal has been well visited in the West but not so completely in emerging markets. Now, writing in the International Journal of Indian Culture and Business Management, R.K. Srivastava of the University of Mumbai, described how he has studied 27 local restaurants serving fast food, Indian, Thai, Chinese or Italian food in order to find out how music choice influences customers.

Srivastava suggests that it is well known that background [music](#) influences the amount of time and money spent by consumers. It helps reduce anxiety, improves mood and reduces stress associated with queuing. His study looks at the impact of the tempo and type of music being played in an eatery and its effect on consumers. He has now tested four hypotheses.

The first: That appropriate music will improve restaurant footfalls. The second that slower music will increase the time people stay in a restaurant. The third that customers will return if they enjoyed the music on their first visit. Finally, the music has to match the type of [food](#) to have the most influence.

The study showed that Indian and Chinese restaurants prefer to play soft music, while [fast food](#) and Thai restaurants prefer hard rock and this correlates with what consumers in those establishments expect. Srivastava confirms the four hypotheses but also shows that a proportion

of those eating in restaurants serving Indian food would prefer to hear rock music while they eat.

"Understanding of the effects of music is particularly useful to service managers, as this element of the environment is relatively inexpensive and easy to control. The results from this study have wider implications for retail and service environment," he concludes. "The use of music is likely to be most effective when it integrates with other atmospheric elements in a holistic manner in order to convey a coherent message and consistent positioning strategy."

More information: 'Musical environment and its effect on restaurant patrons' behaviour in emerging market', *Int. J. Indian Culture and Business Management*, Vol. 11, No. 4, pp.517–537.

Provided by Inderscience Publishers

Citation: Why restaurants play music while you eat (2015, September 28) retrieved 19 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2015-09-restaurants-music.html>

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