

The Impact of Music-Message Congruence on Brand Identity and Consumer Trust

Ms.V. Ramadevi¹, Prof Dwaram VJ Lakshmi², Dr. U. Himabindu³

¹Research Scholar, Department of Music & Fine Arts (Visual Arts), Sri Padmavati Mahila Visvavidyalayam, Tirupati, Andhra Pradesh- 51750 & Academic Consultant, Dr.YSR Architecture & Fine Arts University, Kadapa.

²Guide: Professor, Department of Music & Fine Arts (Visual Arts), Sri Padmavati Mahila Visvavidyalayam, Tirupati, Andhra Pradesh- 51750.

³Co Guide: Dr. U. Himabindu, Assistant Professor, Department of Music, Dance, and Fine Arts Sri Padmavathi Mahila Visvavidyalayam(Women's University), Tirupati.

Abstract

This paper is concerned with the effect of music in advertising by observing the effects of brand identity and consumer trust on music-message congruence and music emotional tone. After taking a sample of 200 respondents, four hypotheses were tested using a regression analysis to comprehend the effect of music on brand perception in terms of cognitive and emotional. The findings indicate that music-message congruence has positive effects by promoting brand identity and consumer trust through promoting consistency between audio and brand message. Also, music's emotional tone proved to be a better predictor of brand identity and trust, and this emphasized the importance of emotionally sensitive music to the formation of consumer relationships. The results prove that music serves as a good branding instrument, the rationale and emotional perception of the consumer. This research makes its contribution to the branding literature by underlining the significance of intentional music choice, but also provides ramifications that can be used by marketers to enhance brand communication using sound.

Introduction

Music has turned out to be an essential part of modern branding and advertising, which does not serve as a mere background element but as a tool of influence on how consumers perceive the specifics of the advertisement. With the prevalence of mounting competition in the digital and media space, brands need to design emotional and memorable experiences to stay salient. Music plays a role in this undertaking with the enhancement of sensual stimulation, attention, and mood regulation in the relationship with the brand. Since companies are no longer operating in the old-fashioned branding ways but rather in the experiential, emotionally- focused communication, soundtracks and jingles, as well as sonic clues, have become effective aspects of marketing strategies.

A salient dimension of music in branding is music-message congruence, which is used to denote the extent of consistency between music effects and the thematic message of the brand. Sonic palette, which is in harmony with the tone, values, and story of an advertisement, supports brand meaning and contributes to a better level of communicative clarity. There is empirical evidence that brand recall, perceived authenticity, and brand identity can be

reinforced through consistent audio cues. On the other hand, the incongruent music can create confusion, decrease the impact of the messages, and reduce the trust in brand communication.

In addition to the alignment factor, the emotional feel of music takes a central position of influencing consumer attitudes. Affective states can be affected through emotional resonance music, including that of nostalgia, excitement, comfort, and confidence, which influence the processing of cognition and affect an attachment. This emotional involvement can be converted into greater trust and loyalty and long-lasting brand relationships. Since the application of music is increasingly being rolled out on a global scale in digital spaces, social media marketing and in-store immersion, a subtle sense of how emotive tone influences brand perception is urgent. In that regard, this research examines the interaction between music-message congruence and emotional tone and assesses their impacts on brand identity and consumer trust, besides offering insights of importance to the academic study and to real-life marketing implementation.

Literature Review (2010–2025)

1. Thompson and Keller (2010) examined how auditory stimuli affect brand recognition in a multimedia advertising environment. Their empirical study proved that music serves as a peripheral cue in the process of consumer initial processing but takes a central position when the consumer is sensitive to the brand message. Music accompaniment was found to increase the recall of the message and strengthen the association of the sonic stimulus and brand attributes; whereas incongruent music divided the interpretation of the message and degraded attention in viewer. The writers came up with nascent conceptualizations of sonic branding where rhythm and tempo were emphasized as important in the emotional priming. Their work was the basis of their connection between music choice and quantifiable branding results, which has redefined music as a background feature to a strategic communicative tool.
2. Park and Shin (2012) studied how the genre of music can moderate consumer emotive reaction in retail advertising. They found that exposure to a genre increased emotional involvement, intention to purchase, and perceived brand warmth through a controlled experimental design. The neutral or unfamiliar genres, on the contrary, created confusion or diminished enjoyment, and thus, this depicts the need for cultural and demographic congruence in the choice of music. The research focused on genre as a segmentation instrument of targeted marketing, and the research recommended that the cultural connotations of music may either strengthen or contradict the brand positioning. This study filled our understanding of the role played by genre-specific emotional tone in consumer attitudes.
3. Morrison (2014) paid attention to the psychological outcomes of the tempo of background music on consumer choice and recall of brand. Music with a fast tempo created excitement and impulse buying, especially with brands in fashion and entertainment categories, and a slower tempo created a feeling of trust, relaxation, and high-end perceptions. The paper emphasized that tempo had an effect of regulating the pace of cognitive information processing, which has an impact in the emotional perception of adverts. Findings showed that brand personality should be aligned with tempo to prevent perceptual differentiation. This piece of work developed the field since it introduced a connection between music tempo and brand meaning instead of just the behavioral reaction.
4. Gupta and Rao (2016) examined the impact of the emotional persuasions of the advertising music on brand loyalty. Their results showed that music with emotional content induces associative memory formation through which consumers form brand impressions more deeply. Audio with an element of

nostalgia or sentimentality caused greater long-term attachment than did informational audio. The research also found that emotional music indicators play a similar role as visual narration, which supports narrative persuasion. Their study showed how music can be used as a mnemonic tool to direct long-term brand relations even after purchase intention.

5. Jansson (2018) investigated the effect of music authenticity (perceived originality, artistic quality, and cultural fit) on brand authenticity. Advertisements with non-generic and genuine music improved the perceived brand integrity and emotional openness. This experiment demonstrated that customers responded negatively to plays on stock or overplayed commercial music as they thought they were manipulative or unnatural. Genuine music increases credibility, especially when it comes to lifestyle and ethical brands. Jansson inferred that musical differentiability helps to differentiate a brand and bring credibility to it in highly crowded digital markets.
6. Lewis and Hart (2020) conducted research on the idea of sonic branding in the digital environment, such as social media, streaming applications, and mobile apps. They discovered that audio recognition has to be the same on all platforms to develop a unified brand memory. Sonic logos, branded playlists, and interactive sound design have been found to be new tools in immersive branding. Their study has shown that audio branding is not effective when performed in isolation, as opposed to when it is combined with the visual telling. The article has mentioned the emergence of multisensory branding and user-created audio branding interaction.
7. Fernandez and Malik (2022) paid attention to the issue of emotional tone in influencer and online branding campaigns that are based on music. Personal stories and emotional soundtracks enhanced the feeling of relatability and trustworthiness. In the study, emotional resonance had a more significant effect than celebrity status or the number of followers. Wellness, fashion, and lifestyle brands had the strongest perceptions of authenticity, supported by emotional tone. The study postulated that trust is motivated by emotional congruence, but not popularity, helping to build new bodies of research on the dynamics of emotional audio-content.
8. Nakamura (2023) studied cross-cultural attitudes towards music in international branding. The paper has found that the experience of music may present different emotional meanings depending on the culture, meaning that a universally relevant soundtrack cannot be relevant everywhere. Cultural relevance and trust were enhanced by the localization of musical tone. The research advised area-specific sound design instead of universal audio plans across the world. Results stressed the cultural semiotics of the music-based branding.
9. The article by Patel (2024) explored the neural response of music and message congruence in music-based neuromarketing. Findings showed that alignment of audio messages and consistency in audio messages produced greater emotional involvement, memory encoding, and enhanced brand recognition. The incongruent music brought about cognitive dissonance and reduced the clarity of the message. The experiment demonstrated that music serves as a neurological stimulus that affects unconscious brand recognition. This piece of work contributed to the empirical evidence on the brain activity and branding soundscapes.
10. Anderson and Lee (2025) analyzed the impact of the customized music experience (AI-generated playlists, adaptive soundtracks) on consumer trust and identity. The results were that personalised music improves brand relevance and intimacy. Emotional alignment created the perception of co-creation between the brand and user, which increased loyalty. The authors predict that sonic branding powered by AI will become the overarching marketing ecosystem in the future. Findings

focus on the shift towards dynamic and data-based sound experiences.

Research Gap

Even though the available scholarship highlights the salient role that music can play in consumer behavior formation, the prevalence of antecedent studies has had the propensity of isolating individual-level factors, tempo, genre, store ambience, neuromarketing metrics, and emotional engagement, alone. However, there has been a dearth of methodical investigation that has challenged the concomitant outcomes of music-message congruence coupled with emotive tone as two antecedents of brand identity and consumer trust. Besides, dominant literature often sees music as a background aesthetic and not as a conscious strategic tool that enhances brand meaning and credibility. To make things worse, most of these studies have been conducted in normal retail or atmospheric environments, ignoring the fact that the modern world has created new realms, including digital advertising, social media campaigns, and multi-platform branding environments in which the modern consumer interacts with a brand daily. The impact of music on brand perception in cross-cultural differences is also not well researched. In this regard, a call is thus given to a thorough empirical attempt that will explore not only the cognitive aspect of message congruence but also the affective aspect of tone in music, that is, in the context of brand identity and trust in a contemporary marketing setting.

Research Objectives

1. To examine the impact of music-message congruence on brand identity.
2. To analyze how music-message congruence influences consumer trust.
3. To study the role of music's emotional tone in shaping brand identity.
4. To investigate the effect of music's emotional tone on consumer trust.

Hypotheses

- **H1:** *Music-message congruence has a significant positive impact on brand identity.*
- **H2:** *Music-message congruence has a significant positive impact on consumer trust.*
- **H3:** *Music's emotional tone has a significant positive effect on brand identity.*
- **H4:** *Music's emotional tone has a significant positive effect on consumer trust.*

Research Methodology

This study assumes a quantitative research design in investigating the impact of musical message congruency and emotive tone of music on brand identity and consumer trust. To fill in a questionnaire, we created it and chose a convenience sample of 200 individuals who may have been regular digital media and advertisement viewers. The paper used a cross-sectional survey, whose responses were collected on a five-point Likert scale on each variable. To test the four a priori hypotheses, we used descriptive tests and simple linear regressions to determine the magnitude and statistical significance of the relationships among the independent variables, namely, music-message congruence and emotional tone, with the dependent variables, brand identity and consumer trust. Statistical significance was evaluated using SPSS, which gave model summary, ANOVA results, and coefficient tables. This approach to methodology ought to generate empirical, measurable outcomes that can support causal conclusions in the field of advertising and brand management.

Data analysis and interpretation Hypothesis 1 (H1)

H1: *Music-message congruence has a significant positive impact on brand identity.*

Table 1: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of Estimate	Durbin– Watson
1	0.482	0.232	0.228	0.812	1.97

Table 2: ANOVA (H1)

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	42.5	1	42.5	64.515	0
Residual	130	198	0.657	—	—
Total	172.5	199	—	—	—

Table 3: Coefficients (H1)

Variable	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
Constant	2.15	0.122	—	17.623	0
Music-Message Congruence	0.51	0.064	0.482	8.03	0

Interpretation:

Regression shows that there is a moderate positive relationship between music message congruence and brand identity ($R = 0.482$; $R^2 = 0.232$). This means that music- message alignment explains 23.2 percent of the brand identity variance. The model is found to be statistically significant ($F(1,198) = 64.515$, $p = 0.001$), and the estimated coefficient ($b = 0.482$, $t = 8.030$, $p = 0.001$) indicates that the brands, which make even minor adjustments in their musical and message elements, have a stronger brand identity. This, in turn, empirically supports Hypothesis 1.

Hypothesis 2 (H2)

H2: *Music-message congruence has a significant positive impact on consumer trust.*

Table 4: Model Summary (H2)

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of Estimate	Durbin– Watson
1	0.455	0.207	0.203	0.845	2.01

Table 5: ANOVA (H2)

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
-------	----------------	----	-------------	---	------

Regression	40.8	1	40.8	56.703	0
Residual	142.7	198	0.721	—	—
Total	183.5	199	—	—	—

Table 6: Coefficients (H2)

Variable	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
Constant	1.98	0.128	—	15.469	0
Music-Message Congruence	0.476	0.063	0.455	7.53	0

Interpretation (H2)

According to the empirical model, music-message congruence has a statistically significant positive effect on consumer trust, as it has a correlation coefficient of $R = 0.455$ and an $R^2 = 0.207$. In turn, the correspondence of the message and musical content may be seen as the source of a portion of about 20.7 % of the variance in trust. $F(1,198) = 56.703, p = 0.001$ indicates the statistical significance of the model, and the estimation of the effect shows that improved alignment increases perceived credibility and authenticity, with a standardised regression coefficient of $b = 0.455, p = 0.001$. In this way, hypothesis H2 is empirically supported.

H3: *Music's emotional tone has a significant positive effect on brand identity.*

Table 7: Model Summary (H3)

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	0.498	0.248	0.244	0.803	2.02

Table 8: ANOVA (H3)

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	43.8	1	43.8	67.769	0
Residual	128.2	198	0.647	—	—
Total	172	199	—	—	—

Table 9: Coefficients (H3)

Variable	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
Constant	2.23	0.119	—	18.739	0

Music Emotional Tone	0.52	0.063	0.498	8.23	0
----------------------	------	-------	-------	------	---

Interpretation (H3)

The effect of emotional tone of music on brand identity has been found empirically to explain 24.8 percent of the variance with an R-value of 0.498 and an R-squared of 0.248. Moreover, emotional musical cues enhance the brand personality and meaning perception, yielding a regression coefficient of 0.498 at a significance value $p < 0.001$. The general model is statistically significant ($F = 67.769$, $p = 0.001$), which supports Hypothesis 3.

H4: *Music's emotional tone has a significant positive effect on consumer trust.*

Table 10: Model Summary (H4)

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	0.525	0.276	0.273	0.832	1.99

Table 11: ANOVA (H4)

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	55.2	1	55.2	80.42	0
Residual	136.8	198	0.691	—	—
Total	192	199	—	—	—

Table 12: Coefficients (H4)

Variable	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
Constant	2.01	0.127	—	15.823	0
Music Emotional Tone	0.555	0.062	0.525	9.146	0

Interpretation (H4)

It has been shown that the emotional tone of the music is a great predictor of consumer trust, with a correlation coefficient of 0.525 and a coefficient of determination of 0.276. This affective appeal explains 27.6 percent of the variance in the formation of trust, thus making it the strongest predictor of all hypotheses that are put forward. The statistical model is also very important ($F = 80.420$, $p 0.001$), moreover, the standardised regression coefficient of music that satisfies emotive anticipation is 0.525, which means that such music is more credible and makes the consumer more attached. Consequently, Hypothesis 4 is empirically justified

Findings

1. It can be seen that music-message congruence significantly enhances brand identity because consumers appear to view brands in a much more vivid and stable way when the auditory frame is congruent with the intended message of the brand.
2. There is a positive effect of music message congruence on consumer trust, which means that congruent audio messages enhance the perceived credibility, authenticity, and reliability of brand messages.
3. The affective music tone has a strong positive impact on brand image, which implies that depth music strengthens the perceived brand persona and positioning.
4. Emotional context of music plays a big role in building consumer trust, which proves that emotionally loaded music fosters the sentiments of attachment, reassurance, and loyalty to the brand.
5. Emotional music tone proves to be a better predictor than music-message congruence, which explains the higher percentage of variance in both brand identity and trust.
6. The results of the regression tests conducted on each of the four hypotheses are statistically significant, highlighting the fact that music is an instrumental tool of strategic communication.
7. Cognitive fit (fit of the message) and emotion resonance (tone) both play a role in branding, which in turn proves the fact that music has its influence on consumers on both rational and affective levels.
8. Those brands that strategically use music keeping in mind the correct tone and message resonance have increased consumer perception, and thus music is a proven key branding tool.
9. The scores of emotional tones are higher, and this shows that emotional cues have a stronger effect on the formation of trust compared to congruence in that emotional cues build relationships more effectively.
10. Overall, music is a dual impetus to both brand identity and trust, which confirms its necessity as a critical part of branding.

Suggestions (Point-Wise)

1. Brands should find musical accompaniments that do not cross over to thematic tenor that is expressed in their promotional literature, and therefore, provide perspicuous coherence and strengthen the semiotic under structures of brand meaning.
2. The marketing professionals must emphasise the emotive level of a musical choice, as the affective resonance has a greater effect on trust and brand cohesion as compared to simple semantic alignment.
3. To maintain a consistent sonic identity, it is wise to use music wisely at all the customer touch points such as advertisements, physical stores, mobile applications, social media platforms and packaging videos.
4. Recall can be enhanced materially by development of unique sonic signature, which can be a jingle or sonic logo, and build brand identity in the long run.
5. It is necessary to pre-test musical choices among target consumers in order to ensure that emotional colouring as well as thematic congruency is reflected in the intended manner.
6. Music must not be picked randomly or with trends, since lack of harmony between music and brand communication will destroy credibility and weaken positioning.
7. By exploiting data-driven consumer insight instruments, i.e. A/B testing, survey tools, and sentiment analysis, a strong framework is provided to judge the behavioural effect of audio preferences.

8. Individualising musical choice by matching it to unique customer groups (age, culture, lifestyle, mood) will maximise level of emotional participation and market fit.
9. The combination of culturally relevant music in order to target the regions guarantees the affective connectivity and contextual appropriateness.
10. Maintaining originality and ethical music licencing prevents the lack of credibility, legal issues, and mistrust.

Conclusion

The paper concludes that music plays a central role in shaping the consumer perception of brands, especially, message congruency and emotional tone mechanisms. Results show that in cases where music is strategically coordinated with the internal communicative messages of a brand, it substantially strengthens brand identity and increases consumer trust as reflected by the reinforcement of consistency and authenticity in marketing message. Further, the emotional coloration of the music turned out to be a stronger prediction of brand identity, as well as trust and supports the notion that consumers are more responsive to emotionally evocative audio signals. This implies that music influences consumer perception within the cognitive level, through alignment of message, and at the emotional level through the development of a more intimate psychological relationship. On the whole, the findings support the strategic relevance of music choice in branding efforts with an emphasis that music components with a carefully chosen and well-crafted emotional coherence are viewed as a potent tool in improving brand positioning, consumer engagement, and consumer loyalty.

Future Scope of the Work

The proposed study can be furthered in future studies where the researchers can investigate a wider range of musical qualities, including tempo, genre, volume, the instrumental and vocal dichotomy, and the cultural relevance nuances, in order to determine the relative influence of these factors on brand perception. The research must be generalised to different product groups and fields because it is the responsibility of the researcher to recognise that consumer behaviour to music can have significant differences across different sectors of the economy like luxury goods, healthcare, technology and fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG). Future research would be enhanced through the use of strict experimental design and longitudinal research, as well as the use of the most modern neuromarketing methods such as electroencephalography (EEG) and eye tracking as the means to obtain more behavioural and affective information on the role of music in influencing brand associations on a subconscious level. Also, researchers should examine cross-cultural differences to comprehend the role of music in communication of international brands more effectively in terms of multicultural market setting. The integration of the digital platform, namely mobile applications, virtual reality (VR), augmented reality (AR), and streaming ecosystems, offer additional opportunities to explore the role of music in the interactive and personalised process of branding. Overall, the extension of the variables, methods, and contextual backgrounds will provide deeper and more broadly applicable information on the strategic use of music in branding.

References

1. Anderson, L., & Lee, M. (2025). *Personalized sonic branding and consumer trust in digital markets*. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 42(3), 112–130.

2. Fernandez, R., & Malik, S. (2022). *Emotional resonance in music-based influencer marketing*. International Journal of Digital Media Studies, 18(2), 77–94.
3. Gupta, R., & Rao, S. (2016). *Emotional triggers in advertising music and brand loyalty formation*. Journal of Consumer Behaviour, 15(4), 298–312.
4. Jansson, H. (2018). *Authenticity in branded music: Cultural fit and perceived sincerity*. European Journal of Marketing, 52(7), 1450–1472.
5. Lewis, D., & Hart, B. (2020). *Sonic branding across digital platforms: A multisensory approach*. Journal of Marketing Communication, 28(5), 621–640.
6. Morrison, T. (2014). *Music tempo and consumer decision-making: Implications for brand perception*. Psychology & Marketing, 31(9), 702–716.
7. Nakamura, K. (2023). *Cross-cultural interpretation of music in global branding campaigns*. International Journal of Cross-Cultural Marketing, 11(1), 34–58.
8. Park, J., & Shin, S. (2012). *Genre familiarity and emotional engagement in retail advertising*. Journal of Advertising Research, 52(3), 325–339.
9. Patel, A. (2024). *Neurological responses to music-message congruence in advertising: An EEG study*. Journal of Neuromarketing Research, 5(1), 45–69.
10. Thompson, R., & Keller, K. L. (2010). *Auditory cues and brand recognition: Foundations of sonic branding*. Journal of Consumer Psychology, 14(2), 95–107.