

## MUSIC IN THE AWARENESS OF RETAIL TRADE CUSTOMERS

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**Purpose:** The aim of this study is to assess the state of customer awareness regarding the use of sensory marketing tools by companies operating in the area of the retail market.

**Methodology:** The study uses secondary sources obtained by means of a measuring instrument prepared for the purposes of this study in the form of an online questionnaire. The study is a pilot and was conducted on a group of Facebook users dedicated to surveys. The survey was conducted on a representative research group of 277 respondents (both women and men) in different age categories. The data was analyzed using statistical methods.

**Findings:** The results of the study show that music stimulates the way customers behave in shopping. In addition, the study focuses on audio marketing, which is still an underestimated area in Poland.

**Originality:** The following article shows the opinions of customers on the use of music in commercial units for marketing purposes, allows you to see the importance of such treatments, among others in the pre-Christmas periods. This paper is addressed to owner's retail stores.

**Keywords:** audiomarketing, sensory marketing, buyer behavior.

**Category of the paper:** Research paper.

## Introduction

Currently, the concept of creation of customer satisfaction is of key importance in the theory and practice of marketing. Nowadays, under the conditions of competitiveness, it is not enough to place a product on the shelf, hanger or display. Increasing competition in the trade sector and customer behavior changes make operation of trade companies more difficult. Subsequently, they undertake numerous actions to encourage clients to buy their products and provide their businesses with measurable profits. Elements such as atmosphere – conscious creation (design) of the store brand are of big importance in achievement of set goals (Kolasińska-Morawska, 2011). Sensory marketing, also referred to as marketing of five senses, is a concept based on: hearing, taste, sight, smell and touch. Its major goal is to enhance perception of the offered

product so as to trigger positive emotions and persuade customers to make the purchase (Pabian, 2011, p. 2). The aim of this study is to assess the state of customer awareness regarding the use of sensory marketing tools by companies operating in the area of the retail market.

## The essence of audio marketing

Sound based marketing (audio marketing) is a sensory marketing tool which affects customers' senses by evoking their emotions and associations. According to M. Książek, audio marketing appeals to customers and develops their purchasing behavior by means of the power of music (Książek, 2014). Audio marketing is used for creation of good atmosphere in stores and promotion of the brands. It can be encountered, among others, in grocery, clothing or cosmetic stores. This is a popular method used by the United Airlines to persuade a consumer to make a purchase. The United Airlines have been using music to create pleasant atmosphere and put their customers in a good mood. Rhapsody in Blue by George Gershwin is played in commercial spots, on the phone while booking the flight as well as onboard before a flight (Schmitt, Simonson, 1999). Audio marketing involves creating unique, positive climate by playing appropriately selected pieces of music completed with suitable information such as advertising announcements which are supposed to motivate customers to make a purchase. It often includes information on the offered products and promotions (Deluga, 2018, p. 38-41). Appropriately selected audio background gives a place character, distinguishes the brand and strengthens its image. Use of audio marketing in a retail store can make the customers stay longer and encourages them to come again. A positive impact on customers' senses can persuade them to have a look at and buy some products. New experiences can enhance and individualize sensation of the brand and increase customer satisfaction. Such actions are supposed to create a unique atmosphere by employing the sense of sight (lighting, shapes, colors, size), sense of smell (feeling of freshness, fragrance), sense of touch (softness, smoothness, temperature), sense of hearing (pitch, volume (Zielińska, Koy, 2017). The customer behavior aims at consumption, that is, fulfillment of their needs. This involves a sequence of reactions in response to concrete stimuli – emotions and instincts which make people satisfy their needs. One of the methods for impacting the shopping decisions of customers through emotions is to create an appropriate shopping atmosphere at the point of sale by using music. According to numerous studies 'two thirds of consumers' decisions are made during shopping' (Zielińska, Koy, 2017, p. 173). This means that the shopping list is likely to change with 66.66% probability, be extended or sometimes shortened. Moreover, French melodies played in the wine department translate into an increase in sales of French wine (to the disadvantage of German wines), whereas German music in the background has a negative influence on sales of both German and French wines. Another study shows that

consumers buy more expensive wines to the accompaniment of classical music as compared to popular hits (Skworek, 2014, p. 100). Iwińska-Knp, K., Sławińska, M studied the issues of sensory marketing in chain stores from the perspective of the customer. The survey was carried out in the years 2015-2016 on a sample of 200 random respondents – chain store customers. According to the results, music kinds preferred by the customers were techno, house, dance and hip hop. Besides, the respondents indicated that popular pieces of music boost purchasing on condition they are properly amplified, songs with a melody line require less volume, whereas unknown music need to be moderately quiet. The study by A. Rybowska shows that in 68% of music played in chain stores is properly chosen and the respondents agreed that the type and volume of music needs to be consistent with the customers' preferences. (Rybowska, 2014). According to this, it is identification of the target group which is of key importance.

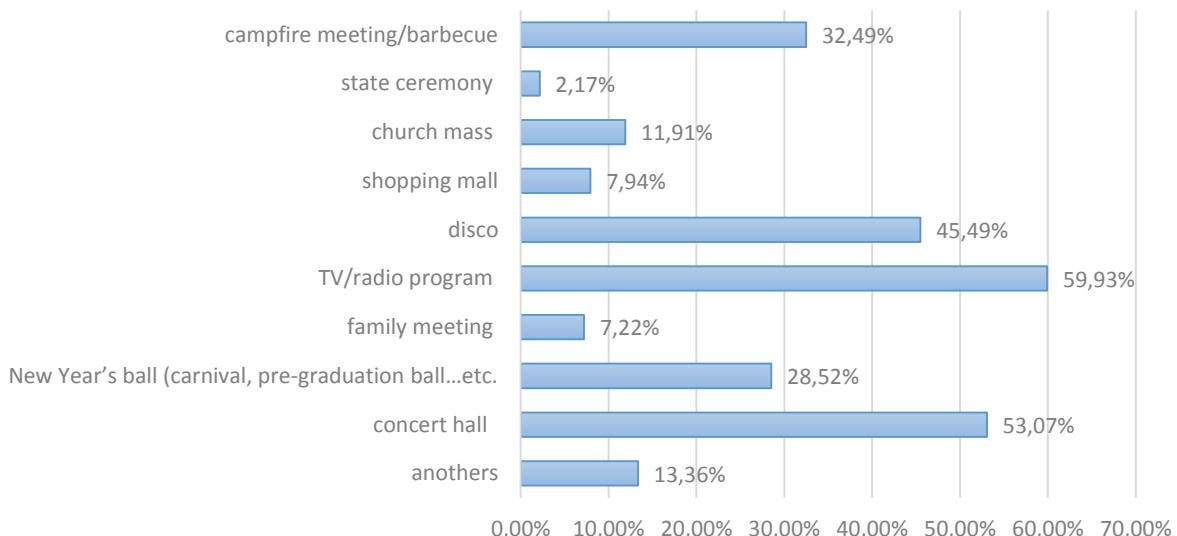
The subject of this study is sensory marketing which involves the sense of hearing. This area focuses on sound management within chain stores. There can be foreground and background music whose conscious selection makes it possible to provide an enjoyable atmosphere in restaurants and department stores. Foreground music usually includes words and differs in terms of tempo, frequency, and volume. The background music, however, is of instrumental character with small variability of the above features. (Hulten, Broweus, van Dijk, 2011, p. 77). It needs to be stressed that capturing attention of the hearing organ can also be used to increase productivity of the business personnel. This is well illustrated by IKEA, a Swedish chain store, whose employees were enquired about the most frequent questions asked by customers in order to improve the quality of customer service. The survey showed that the most frequently asked question was about the location of shopping carts. To meet the customer demand, they decided to use the sound of hitting shopping carts near the place they are kept. (Hulten, Broweus, van Dijk, 2011, p. 78-79). Audio marketing finds application mostly in medium area stores, usually in cloth stores, and in large area, multi branch stores, rather than in small area stores (Zalewska, 2014, p. 48). Thus, a question arises: how do shops use music to attract clients and what is the opinion of customers on this subject?

## Audiomarketing in the consciousness of retail store customers – survey results

The study uses secondary sources obtained by means of an online questionnaire prepared for the purposes of this study. The study is a pilot and was conducted on a group of Facebook users dedicated to surveys. The online questionnaire consisted of 12 questions consisting of three single-choice imprint questions, two multiple-choice questions, five single-choice questions and two single-choice scale questions. The survey was conducted on a representative research group of 277 respondents. In this group, 68.59% of respondents were women and

31.40% were men. The age of the respondents was divided into ranges of 18-25 years, 26-40 years, 41-55 years, over 55 years of age. The survey was conducted on 12.03-15.04.2021. The data was analyzed using statistical methods.

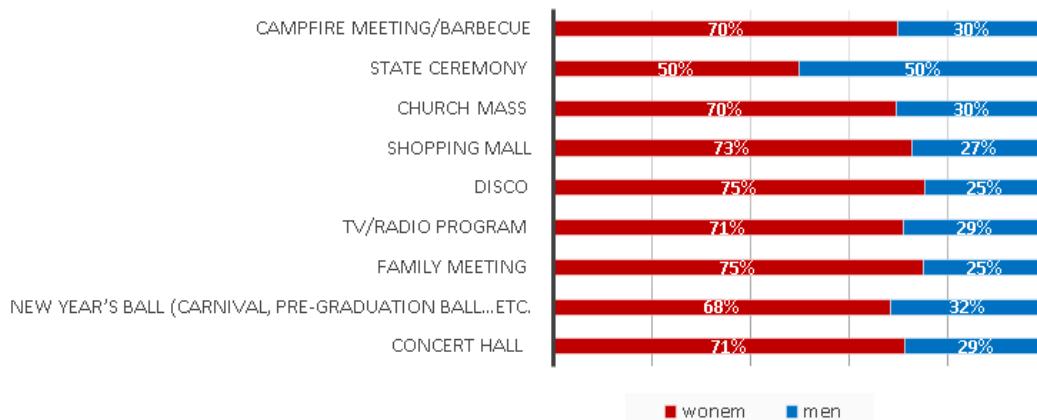
The first thing that we see upon entering a store are products arranged on the shelves; we can feel spreading smell and examine the articles by watching and touching them. These activities are often accompanied by music which by 59.9% of respondents was associated by with a music program on TV or on the radio, 53.1 % thought about a concert hall. Having heard the sounds of music nearly half of the respondents thought about a disco (45.5%), whereas 32.5% associated the music with a social meeting. Every fourth person imagined a ball, only 2.2% of the respondent's associated music with a state ceremony. Due to the fact that the majority of respondents (50.54%) come from cities over 50,000. of residents and are young at an age (87.73%) it can be concluded that demographic data have a large impact on the associations of respondents here. When analyzing the chart below (figure 1), it should be noted that the question was conjunctive.



**Figure 1.** Presentation of respondents' associations upon hearing music/singing [%]. Source: own research.

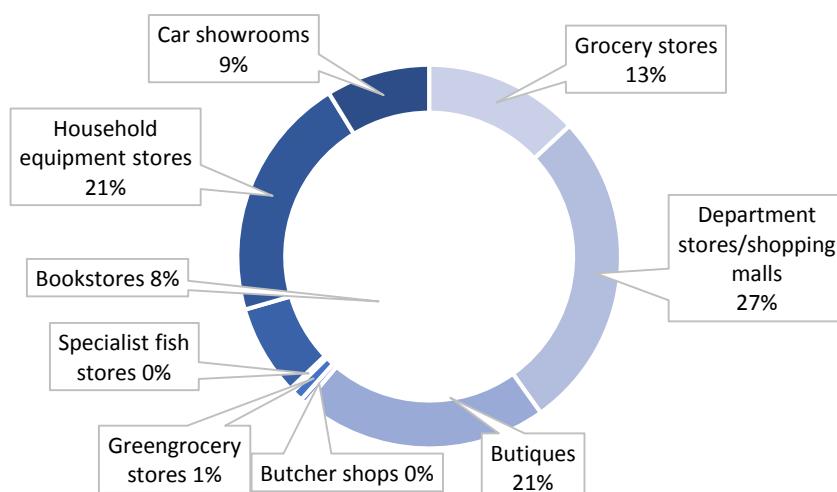
The respondents associate music/singing with a TV/radio program. This answer was chosen out of nine which accounted for 24% of all the answers provided. This percentage shows this is a TV/radio program that comes to the mind of every fourth respondent while hearing music/singing in a store. These responses were given mostly by women (71%). As many as 21% of respondents associate music with a concert hall which comes right after a TV/radio program. In this case, the number of women was also prevailing – 71%. The third position was attributed to a disco, where again women definitely dominated – 75%. Interestingly, as regards associating music with a state ceremony, the opinions were divided 50/50, this response, however accounted for only 1% of all the responses.

In an open version of this question the respondents said they associated music with something pleasant "relax", "walking on a rainy night", "freedom", "peace and quiet", fun such as "theater", "music festival" as well as with something which makes every day activities including driving or cleaning more enjoyable. These answers were provided mainly by young people - 88%, aged 18-25. In this age group, the most frequent associations were successively: a TV/radio music program, concert hall and a campfire/ barbecue meeting. Respondents aged 26-40 associated music with a concert hall, whereas respondents aged 41-55 with a TV/radio program, those aged above 55 thoughts about a mass in a church (figure 2).



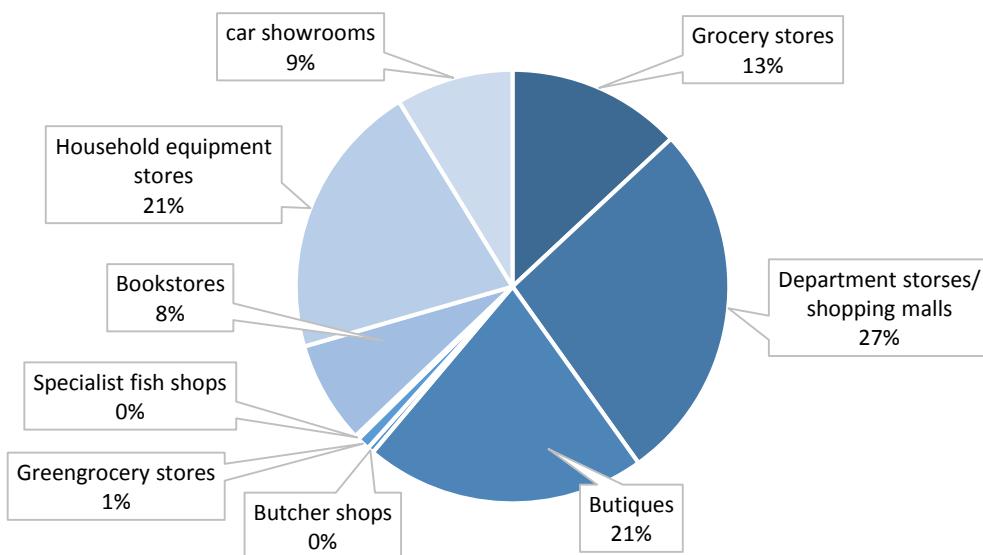
**Figure 2.** Presentation of what the respondents associate with music /singing according to gender [%].  
Source: own study.

According to the respondents, audio marketing can achieve its goals and is necessary in department stores (multi branch shopping centers), boutiques and household equipment stores. The survey participants aged 18-25 provided the biggest number of responses (88% of the respondents), their responses were the same as in the first and the third case, whereas boutiques were indicated on the second position. When analyzing (figure 3), one should be aware that the question was of a conjunctive nature.



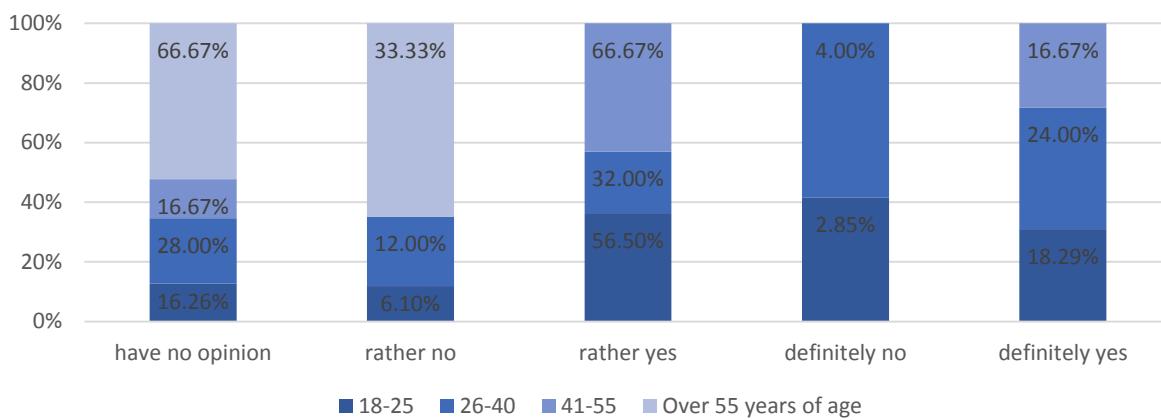
**Figure 3.** Respondents' opinions about where audio marketing is likely to achieve its goals and where it is necessary [%]. Source: own study.

The most numerous groups of respondents were residents of big cities with the population of more than 50 thousand inhabitants, that is, 140 respondents which accounts for 51% of all the respondents. In response to the questions, they indicated department stores (multi branch shopping centers), household equipment stores and grocery shops which appear for the first time as an example of stores where sound marketing can achieve its goals. It can be concluded that due to a big number of both medium and large area stores, basing on their own experiences, big city residents marked the below presented answers. Nine persons provided an answer to the open question, seven of whom belonged to the group aged 28-25. Interestingly, this time it was the male point of view that prevailed – 78%. Three male respondents were against using music in stores, however only one of them was guided by sensory preferences, the remaining two were against because of inappropriately chosen music base (figure 4).



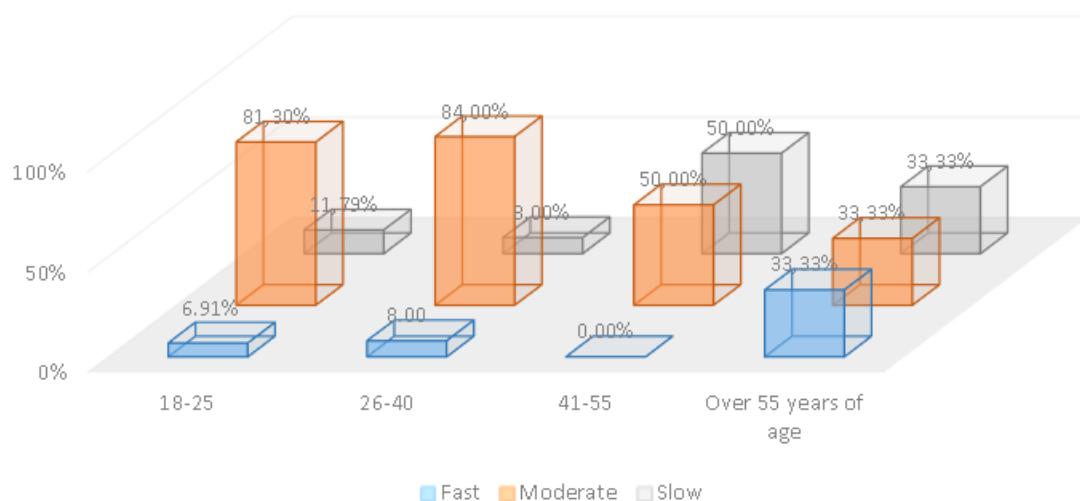
**Figure 4.** Respondents' indications as to what kinds of stores audio marketing is necessary and is most likely to achieve its goals [%]. Source: own study.

Persons aged 18-25, 26-40, 41-55 'rather' like music during shopping, whereas those aged over 55 have no opinion on this subject (66.67%) and 33.33% of the respondents say 'rather no' to music in stores. The 'rather yes' answer is directly followed by 'definitely yes' 18.24% (18-25 years), 24.00% (26-40 years), 16.67% (41-55 years). Interestingly, the data shows preferences concerning music during shopping for people aged over 55 (figure 5).



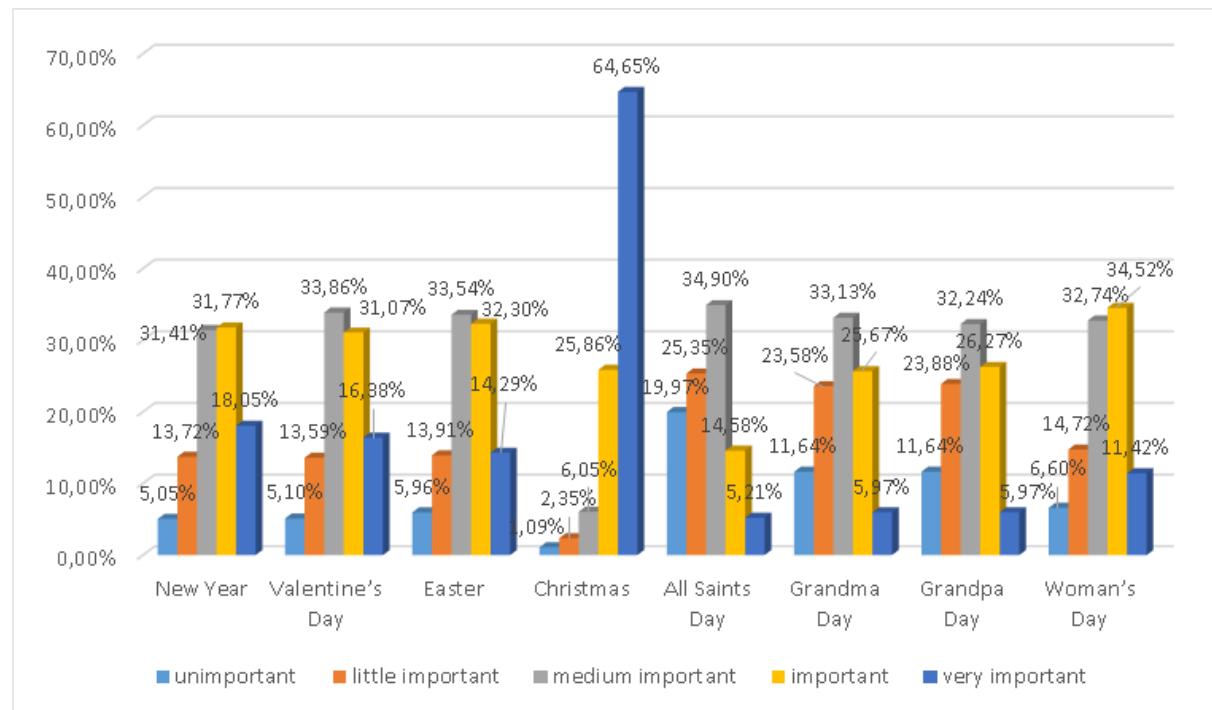
**Figure 5.** Opinions of respondents in different age ranges about background music while shopping [%]. Source: own study.

Respondents aged 18-25 and 26-40 said that if they could they would choose melodies with moderately slow tempo. The respondents' opinions are divided. Those aged 41-55 prefer melodies with moderate to slow tempo. However, those over 55 prefer slow, moderate, and fast tempo in the same percentage (33.33%) (figure 6). With the intention of appealing to the largest possible group of retail store customers, the most accurate is the choice of a moderate pace, which in each of the age groups is in the leading position. It is worth mentioning that the moderate pace of music was most often the choice of rural area inhabitants and dwellers of big cities with population over 50 000. Slow tempo was chosen 50% less frequently. The least preferred is a fast melody, however in the country and in cities with population over 50 000 it is a more frequent choice than in towns with population up to 20 000 and those with population between 20-50 000.



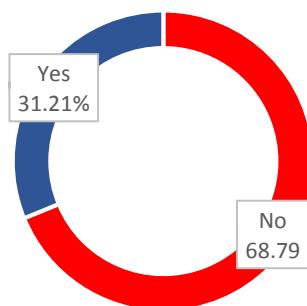
**Figure 6.** Respondents' preferences regarding the pace of music accompanying customers during shopping in points of sale according to age [%]. Source: own study.

The chart below shows to what extent it is important for the respondents to build an atmosphere when shopping in the pre-Holiday periods on the specified holidays (figure 7). As you can see, the dominant answer is Christmas. This result may be due to the special time that is associated with this holiday and its numerous traditions and customs. The presented graphic form of the answers given is a kind of introduction to the following analysis with a distinction between the age of respondents. Persons aged 18-25 (34.16%) consider creation of a positive atmosphere during New Year shopping as important, whereas those aged 26-40 (36.36%) as medium important. Respondents aged 41-55 (65.22%) and over 55 (45.45%) think that generating the atmosphere is of big importance. Similarly, the relationship in the first two age ranges in the case of Valentine's Day is formed, which means: persons aged 18-25 (33.98%) and 26-40 (32.81%) think that creation of atmosphere during Valentine's Day shopping is of medium importance. Respondents aged 41-55 (40.00%) consider creation of this atmosphere as important, whereas those over 55 (50.00%) as very important. The age range of 41-55 years (88.24%) thinks quite differently in the case of Easter. These persons and aged 26-40 (42.25%) think that creation of welcoming atmosphere during Easter shopping is of medium importance. In turn, respondents 18-25 years old (34.33%) assess the construction of this atmosphere as important, over 55 years of age (50.00%) as very important. Looking at the Christmas holiday, you can see that all age groups consider it very important to build an atmosphere when shopping on this day. This time persons aged 18-25 (33.74%) and 26-40 (50.85%) in All Saints' Day, as in the case of the New Year, Valentine's Day and Easter, they consider it moderately important to create the right atmosphere when shopping. In the case of respondents 41-55 years old (30.77%), opinions were divided between unimportant and important. However, the group over 55 years old (50.00%) thought the atmosphere while shopping on the occasion of this day was very important. Turning to the pre-Christmas periods associated with the holidays of loved ones, it can be noted that persons aged 18-25 (32.87%) and 26-40 (43.55%) consider building atmosphere during Grandma Day as medium important. Respondents at the age of 41-55 (40.00%) think that building atmosphere during this day is little important, whereas people aged over 55 (45.45%) say it is very important. On Grandfather's Day, respondents aged 18-25 (32.87%) and 26-40 (33.97%) believe that building atmosphere on Grandpa Day shopping is medium important. Respondents aged 41-55 (57.14%) are of the opinion that creation of atmosphere on that day is little important, whereas those who are over 55 (41.67%) say that it is very important. On Women's Day respondents aged 18-25 (36.36%) consider building atmosphere during Woman's Day to be important, whereas persons aged 26-40 (54.17%) are of the opinion that it is of medium importance. The opinions of respondents aged 41-55 (37.50%) were divided into little important and medium important. The group of respondents over 55 years old (50.00%) thought it was very important. These answers depend primarily on the age of the subjects. However, as mentioned earlier, the most important period where the use of sound marketing is important for the respondents is Christmas.



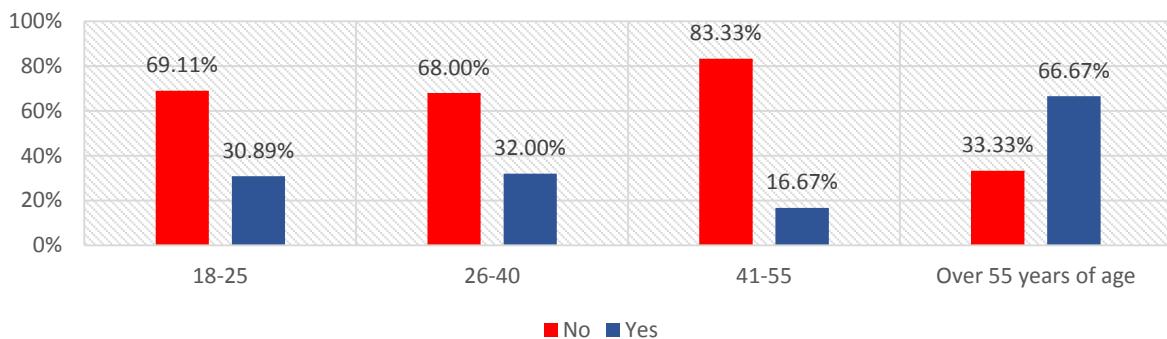
**Figure 7.** Respondents' opinion on the importance of building atmosphere during shopping in the pre-holiday periods [%]. Source: own study.

During Christmas shopping majority of the respondents (68.79%) did not feel a sudden impulse to buy gifts upon hearing sounds of music which was supposed to make them purchase more products (figure 8).



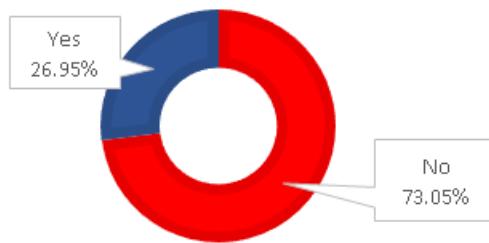
**Figure 8.** Respondents' opinions on the subject whether music boosts sales in the period prior to Christmas [%]. Source: own study.

As many as 66.66% of the respondents from the group aged 41-55 said 'no'. Whereas those over 55 did not happen to buy more products in a pre-holiday period under the influence of music (figure 9).



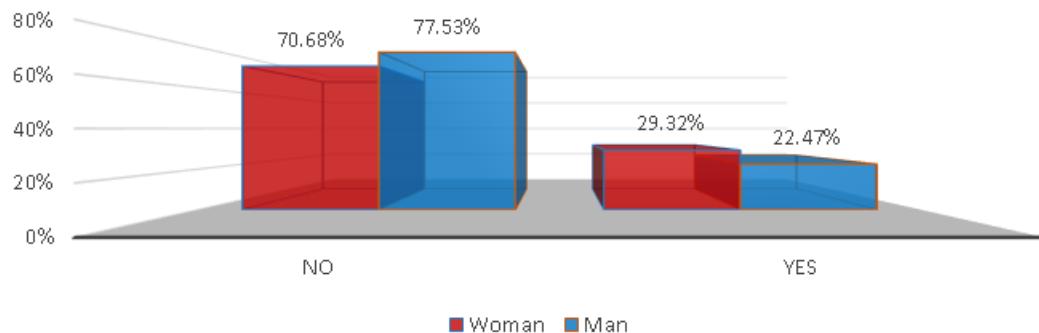
**Figure 9.** Presentation of respondents' answers to a question whether music increases sales in the pre-holiday period according to age [%]. Source: own study.

73.05% out of 277 respondents said they had never lost track of time due to the pace of music broadcast in stores (figure 10). Such information allows you to define two different conclusions. The first of them is that the respondents were not aware of the loss of time and the second that audio marketing was not properly selected and therefore did not fulfill its task.



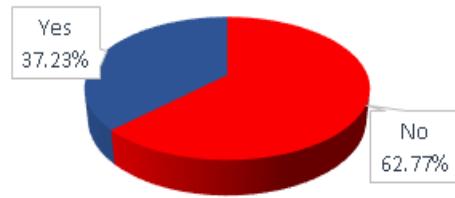
**Figure 10.** Respondents' answers to the question whether tempo of music made them lose track time while shopping [%]. Source: own study.

As compared to women (29.32%) fewer men (22.47%) lost track of time under the influence of music tempo during shopping (figure 11).



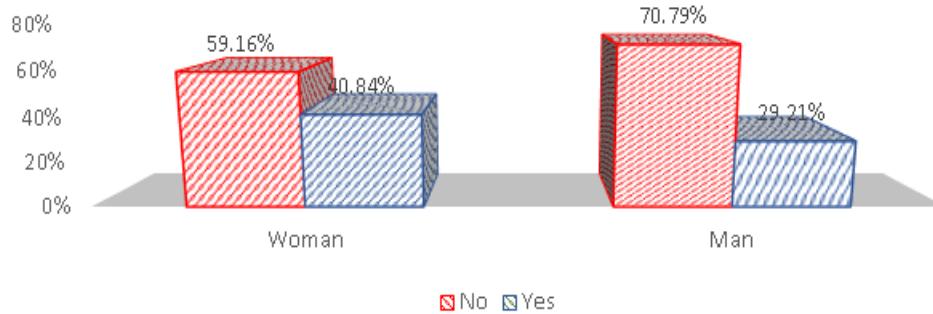
**Figure 11.** Respondents' answers to the question whether tempo of music played during shopping made respondents lose track of time according to gender [%]. Source: own study.

Merely 37.23% of the respondents said that they would return to the store because of music. More than a half of the respondents (62.77%) did not confirm such a dependence (figure 12).



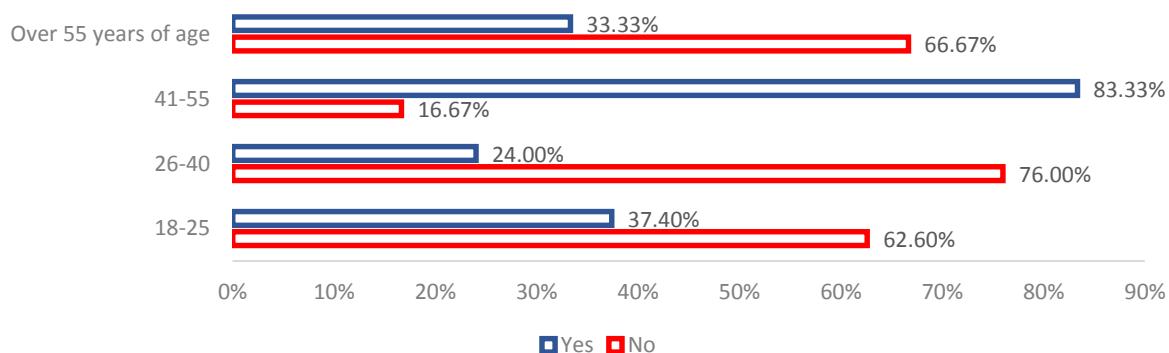
**Figure 12.** Respondents' answer to the question whether satisfying music makes them come back to a given store [%]. Source: own study.

Neither women (59.16%) nor men (70.79%) notice a connection between music and their being willing to revisit a given store (figure 13).



**Figure 13.** Respondents' answers to the question whether satisfying music makes them come back to a given store according to age [%]. Source: own research.

The group of 41–55-year-old respondents do notice (83.33%) a link between appropriately chosen music base with willingness to visit the store again. The remaining groups, however, do not observe such a connection (figure 14).



**Figure 14.** Respondents' answers to the question whether satisfying music makes them come back to a given store according to age [%]. Source: own study.

## Conclusions

The survey results show that music does not necessarily associate with something solemn, but rather with joy, relax and recreation, and therefore it finds perfect application in audiomarketing. Music evokes emotions and positive feelings; it makes people feel relaxed so they more willingly engage in shopping without looking at the watch. It is obvious though that to achieve its goal it needs to be appropriately selected. Therefore, having a music base well matched to the needs of customers is of key importance as it can either make them stay longer or leave sooner.

The above presented results show that when choosing to use music in a store one should offer appropriate music base, otherwise clients are likely to leave the store sooner. This can lead to a decrease in sales and, subsequently revenues – being in a hurry consumers focus only on necessary products and stick to the shopping list overlooking the remaining ones and are likely to visit other shops where they can feel better and more relaxed.

Use of audio marketing in the pre-holiday period - New Year, Valentine's Day, Easter, All Saints' Day, Grandma Day, Grandpa Day is thought by the respondents to be medium and even very important. These answers largely depend on the respondents' age. The most important period, however, when application of audiomarketing is most appreciated is Christmas time.

In the light of the above-mentioned results of the survey, it can be noted that not all areas of audiomarketing are well developed in Poland. Negative answers of the respondents to the question whether sounds of music encourage them to buy more gifts in the pre-Christmas period show that current efforts fail to persuade customers to buy extra products. The same conclusion can be drawn for the question about losing track of time because of the tempo of music played in a store, where almost  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the respondents gave negative answers. Slightly more than one third of the respondents said that they were revisiting a store where they could hear music/songs they liked. Slightly more than half of the respondents did not make such an observation. This area of marketing is either poorly known on the Polish market or inappropriately managed. It should be emphasized though that retail stores which use audiomarketing in the form of music should give preference to its moderate or slow tempo.

The above study should be treated as an introduction to further research in the area of audiomarketing. Further research could be based on the example of specific commercial units and focus on the effectiveness of using audiomarketing tools.

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